

PCZONE

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
REVIEW!**

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

Rampage! The king of the shooters retakes its crown

UK EXCLUSIVE!

SPLINTER CELL 2: PANDORA TOMORROW

PLAYED!

We unlock the stealth sequel

DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

X2: THE THREAT

**TERMINATOR 3: WAR
OF THE MACHINES**

**STUNNING
NEW SHOTS**

**LORD OF THE RINGS
THE BATTLE FOR
MIDDLE-EARTH**

IF YOUR COVERMOUNT IS MISSING
PLEASE CONSULT YOUR NEWSAGENT

TINY COMPO: What are you
said to be on when you get
10 straight kills in UT 2004?

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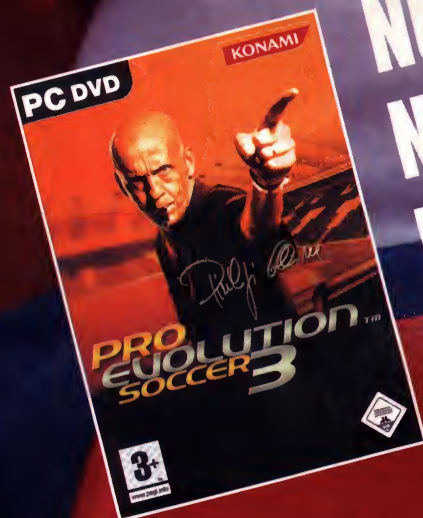


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**NO CORPORATE HOSPITALITY.
NO CELEBRITY GIRLFRIENDS.
NO PRAWN SANDWICHES.
REAL FOOTBALL. REAL FANS.**



Predictions: the 20-step guide to 2004

- 2004 will be the best year yet for PC games.
- I will give up smoking (and start again by way of self-congratulation a few weeks later).
- *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2* will be released – and both will be brilliant. Forget about any negative comments you might read on Internet fan forums. Anyone that wastes their time slugging a game off before they've seen or played it is an idiot.
- Will Porter will drink nearly a whole pint of lager before performing his favourite party trick, the multi-coloured yawn.
- We will double our circulation and the editorial team will be collectively knighted.
- Steve Hill will admit to a secret addiction to a MMORPG and denounce *Championship Manager* for its lack of goblins.
- EA will release another version of *FIFA Football*.
- Martin Korda will continue to grow at an alarming rate.
- We will piss off approximately 6.3 publishing companies and 3.4 development teams over the year with our honest scoring system, commitment to crude language and inability to pander to stupid spelling conventions on the cover.
- Wandy will be reborn as a beautiful young lady called Philipa and will lose all interest in hardware, preferring to spend her time playing *The Sims* instead.
- Multiplayer gaming will become firmly entrenched in the public's consciousness, thanks to consoles finally coming of age and dragging the mainstream into the 21st century.
- Suzy Wallace will wash her mouth out with soap.
- We will be roughly chastised by a PR person for not scoring a game highly enough. "84%? I mean how can you justify that when blah, blah, blah..."
- Paul Presley will insist that the future of sailing/flying/train-driving games is rosy.
- We will receive a letter from a Northern reader incensed at our inability to tell the difference between two pieces of obscure military hardware.
- Jamie Sefton will lose his temper with someone/something every day without fail, and then smash his fist on his keyboard before latching onto an obsolete piece of gaming hardware and proclaiming it as the 'next big thing'.
- A new graphics card will be released approximately every 6.7 days.
- Our art and production team will moan they don't get invited on free jollies/lunches/drinks evenings. Tough – learn to write.
- Anthony Holden will make sweeping and wholly baseless statements about the rest of the team's taste in music/games/women.
- And finally, we will continue to bring you news from the cutting-edge of gaming, along with the only reviews you can trust and the biggest and most important exclusives.

So... Business as usual. Hope you had a brilliant New Year and that 2004 brings you everything your heart desires.

Dave Woods
Editor



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004 P54

World's first review of the stunning
team-based shooter which has got the
opposition quaking in their boots

COVER DISCS P124



■ FOUR EXCLUSIVE DEMOS...

The hilarious *Armed & Dangerous*,
Unreal II: XMP, a new *Breed* demo
and *FireStarter*.

Plus demos of the sci-fi sequel
Deus Ex: Invisible War, *Secret
Weapons Over Normandy* and this
month's Free Play game *Warning
Forever* (see page 15).

■ DVD EXCLUSIVE

SEVEN demos exclusive to the DVD,
including *Broken Sword: The Sleeping
Dragon*, *Age of Mythology: The Titans*,
Warlords IV and *Dungeon Siege*:
Legends Of Aranna, plus DVD footage
of *Armed & Dangerous* and the full
version of *Unreal II: XMP*.



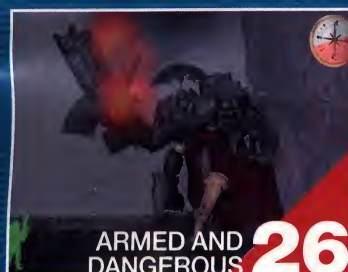


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PCZONE

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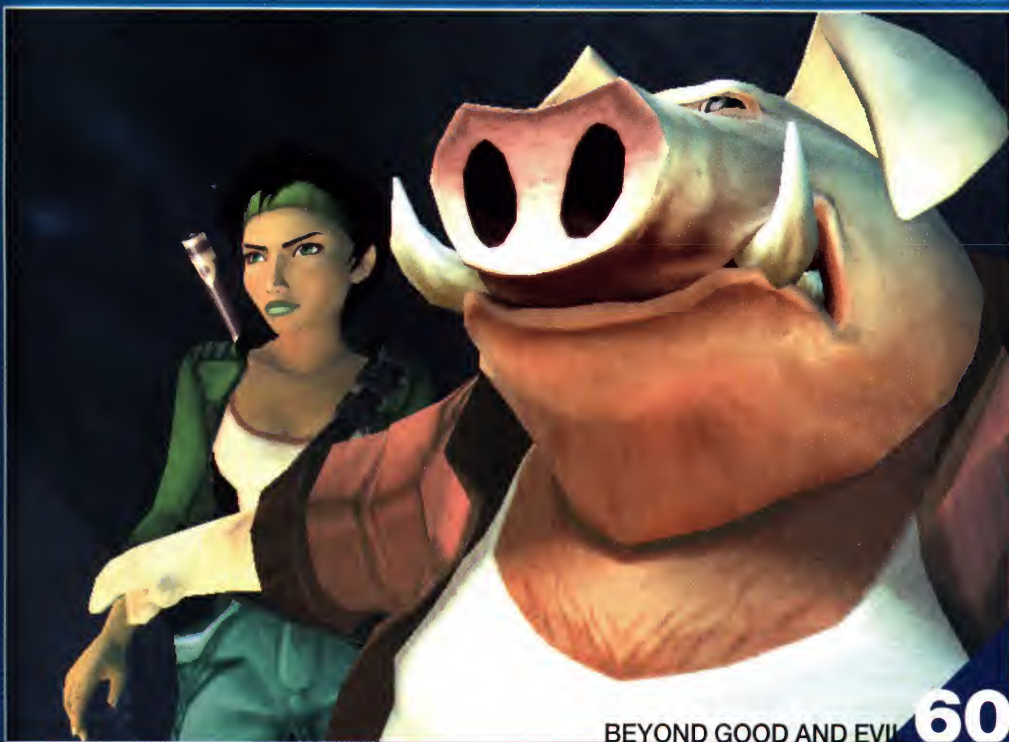
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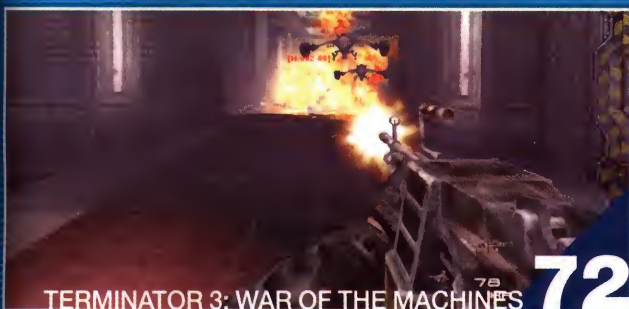
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On sale Feb 5. Don't miss it!



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WIN!

TINY COMPO Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: Tiny Compo (138), PC ZONE, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ. The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing date: February 4, 2003. The winner of our January cover (136) is Anthony Goddard, who knew that Vampires are invariably killed when wooden stakes are rudely shoved into their fat black hearts.

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**FIRST
Look!**

Ryan McKane R.I.P.

RACE DRIVER 2



Exclusive! We play Codemasters' most ambitious motorsport racer yet

PETROL-HEAD: Jamie Sefton

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

PUBLISHER Codemasters
DEVELOPER Codemasters
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE April
WEBSITE www.codemasters.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- 15 different types of motorsport
- 35 vehicles that all handle differently
- New Terminal Damage model that can write-off cars
- New Story mode with no Ryan McKane!

"The Terminal Damage element puts a lot of pressure on you as a racing driver to drive right"

**GAVIN RAEBURN
CODEMASTERS**

"WE WANT to do for variety of motorsport what *Gran Turismo* did for the variety of cars," says Gavin Raeburn, head of Codemasters' racing development studio about *Race Driver 2: The Ultimate Racing Simulator*. Codemasters' latest game is the sequel to last year's *TOCA Race Driver*, except the *TOCA* moniker has now been dropped in favour of a game that encompasses a staggering 15 different types of championship racing.

"We basically saw an opportunity to feature lots of real types of racing games that haven't been covered before, and put them in one game," continues Gavin. "We have Truck Racing, Indy Car, Rally Racing, Classic Cars, Open Wheel Grand Prix, 1934 Hot Rods – a rapid turnover of powerful vehicles with completely unique handling mechanics." *Race Driver 2* has 35 of the world's most exotic and aspirational cars to test-drive, including the Jaguar E-Type, the Land Rover Bowler Wildcat and for the first time ever, the V12 Aston Martin DB9 – a wet dream for all sports car fetishists.

CRASH COURSE

One feature the team was adamant would make it into the new game was Terminal Damage – realistic crash damage modelling that can crush the front and back of vehicles, smash glass, send wheels flying off and completely write-off a car during a race. "The Terminal Damage element puts a lot more pressure on you as a racing driver, because you have to drive right," says Gavin. "If you hit a wall at 80mph, it's game over."



You'd be proud if your car was sponsored by a maker of decorative rugs.

Race Driver 2's sophisticated damage modelling means that if you damage the engine and gearbox, for example, the car will start to drop out of gear. Basically, you'll no longer be able to use other cars to slow you down or as crash barriers to help you squeeze around tight corners – you'll have to follow a correct racing line.

"Manufacturers are fine with us crashing their cars, as long as it's realistic," adds Gavin. "We've had Aston Martin in and they were really happy with how their cars looked and handled in the game, and allowed us to virtually smash up their £175,000 pride and joys!"

WHAT'S THE STORY?

TOCA Race Driver had a very mixed response regarding its lead character, the arrogant American Ryan McKane. He's now been unceremoniously dumped from the new game. *Race Driver 2* is played in first-person, with specially-created FMV cut-scenes drawing your non-specific

character into the action. "The ultimate goal is to become Open Wheel Grand Prix champion," says Gavin. "There's no silly love interest or anything like that, it's just hardcore racing."

For the multiplayer game, the PC's online code has been completely re-written, so that the number of cars and performance has doubled. There'll also be the ability to set up your own server, plus buddy/exclusion lists and instant player rankings.

Most importantly, *Race Driver 2* plays like a dream. We thrashed a Ford Mustang and a Land Rover around a couple of beautifully-detailed courses and although both vehicles handled very differently, the game itself had that trademark smooth pick-up-and-play addictive driving quality Codemasters seem to be able to roll off the production line at will. Ryan McKane is dead. Long live *Race Driver 2: The Ultimate Racing Simulator*. **PC**



Terminal Damage means that a high-speed crash now ends a race sharpish.



The annoying American driver Ryan McKane has been left out of *Race Driver 2*.



Race Driver 2: The Ultimate Racing Simulator aims to be the most comprehensive motorsport game available.

DETAILED COURSES

Codemasters has really improved the graphics for *Race Driver 2*, with dynamic lighting, motion blur, true depth of field and mapped shadows – all at a solid 60fps.

MIX 'N' MATCH

Race Driver 2 has 31 championships and 58 tracks, with a huge variety of motorports including Stock Car, Classic Car, Rally Cross, Super Trucks and Street Racing.

NO TWO LITRES!

Race Driver 2 has an enviable garage of 35 powerful and desirable vehicles including the Jaguar E-Type and the new V12 Aston Martin DB9.

SMASH 'EM UP

Race Driver 2's damage modelling means that each vehicle goes through different stages of damage that start to affect handling, forcing you to use a more realistic racing line and the slipstream of other drivers.

GAME MODES

A new Sim mode for hardcore fans enables you to tweak your cars and repair them between competitions.

RACING ONLINE

As you play the Story mode, you'll encounter different motorsports that you can unlock and play online. So, you could join a Vintage Classic competition, even though you may not have unlocked it in single-player.





ALL THE NEWS, VIEWS AND RUMOURS FROM THE WORLD OF PC GAMING

BULLETIN



COMPUTER VIRUS

■ ASSOCIATE EDITOR Jamie Sefton

▲ Oh God. After the agonisingly horrible flu I've just had to endure this month, I just wish I'd had access to a decent real-life firewall that could snuff out nasty viruses. Like my humble PC, I too have been suffering from slowdown, overheating, strange visuals and surprising pop-ups, but you can't just turn off the power and reboot – it's just endless days of Lemsip mixed with Terry & Gaby.

Luckily however (and don't tell Dave Woods), I've also had the opportunity to get my teeth into the recent crop of PC games – *Call Of Duty* (kill Nazis), *Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne* (kill in slo-mo), *Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic* (kill the Sith) and *Championship Manager: Season 03/04* (kill your football team). It really is a great time to own a gaming PC and I personally just can't wait to get my twitching hands on *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2* – although when exactly that's going to happen this year remains a Scooby Doo-style mystery.

In Bulletin this month, however, we have solid confirmation of several gaming corks. These include the new *Warlords: Battlecry III* on this page, Sports Interactive's new *Eastside Hockey Manager* game (page 11), info on disco-themed (yep, we're not kidding) first-person shooter *Hollow* (page 15) and an interview with *Pro Evolution Soccer 3*'s eccentric producer Shingo 'Seabass' Takatsuka (page 19).

Also, along with our regular faves of Emulation Zone (page 17), a Special Report on the growing number of adverts in games (page 12) and The Man Who Knows (page 18), we have Free Play, a new section dedicated to bringing you the best, completely free PC games (see page 15). Happy, cough, new, cough... year!

You're an Elementalist!



EXCLUSIVE! NEW SCREENSHOTS AND TANTALISING DETAILS OF THE NEXT INSTALMENT IN THE *BATTLECRY* SERIES, *WARLORDS: BATTLECRY III*



Graphics have been given a thorough upgrade.



Now, who lives in a castle like this?

BEARDIES welcome! Creator of the *Warlords* series, Steve Fawcner, and his new company Infinite Interactive – an offshoot of Strategic Simulations Group – has given *PC ZONE* exclusive access to the latest visuals and info on its forthcoming fantasy RTS sequel *Warlords: Battlecry III*.

The previous two *Battlecry* titles both enjoyed critical and commercial success, with the last adventure gaining 80% and a *PC ZONE* Essential award in issue 116. However, fans of the series, set in the mystical dragon-festooned land of Etheria, can expect a real leap forward with *Battlecry III*, both with graphics and the non-linear dynamic campaigns.

RACE RELATIONS

Battlecry III's major addition is the five new races (making a total of 16), although two are made from the old discarded human race. There's the Knights, a race of humans reliant on their powerful armoured cavalry; and the Empire, well-organised bastions of civilisation and trade, with excellent troops, cute-but-deadly Imperial War Elephants and a self-taught knowledge of magic.

The Ssrathi, meanwhile, are reptilian humanoid creatures from the tropical jungle who have the ability to hatch dinosaurs to use in battle, along with a

"The Plaguelords are a group of nasty creatures featuring ghouls and some multi-headed hydras"

handy collection of fire and poison spells. The Swarm, meanwhile, are insect-like creatures ranging from giant wasps and ants to frightening Scorpionmen that would need more than a bottle of Raid to kill. Finally, the Plaguelords are a group of nasty creatures such as ghouls and multi-headed hydras, who rely upon their lovely collection of virulent diseases to weaken foes.

SPEAK AND SPELL

Battlecry III is teeming with over 130 spells, 30 of which are new, spread over three spheres of magic. One of these, Arcane, enables your hero

characters to modify and soup-up spells for more devastating results. There'll also be brand new magical items to hoard away in your mountain retreat, including scrolls, potions and rare collector's items – although rumours of white chocolate Kit Kats appearing in the game seem to be quite unfounded.

Infinite Interactive also promises an easier-to-learn Hero Development System, with eight new classes, new dragon species and breath weapons, different shops for buying battle items, new terrain such as jungle, rock and lava, and subterranean caverns. There's also a full map editor with the ability to create random maps for single and multiplayer skirmishes.

SPIT AND POLISH

Graphically, the series hasn't moved into true 3D yet, but the smart 2D isometric engine has been given an overhaul so that animations are smoother and more lifelike. A new particle system improves the look of spells and magic effects and the better terrain-rendering makes maps a pleasure to behold.

Yep, comparing the merits of *Warlords: Battlecry III* with Blizzard's *Warcraft III* could cause many a drunken dwarven punch-up in the taverns of Etheria when the game is released next year. We'll have movies and more soon.



■ Publisher: Enlight
■ Developer: Infinite Interactive
■ ETA: Q2 2004
■ Website: www.infinite-interactive.com



SPECIAL REPORT
Are adverts the future for games?



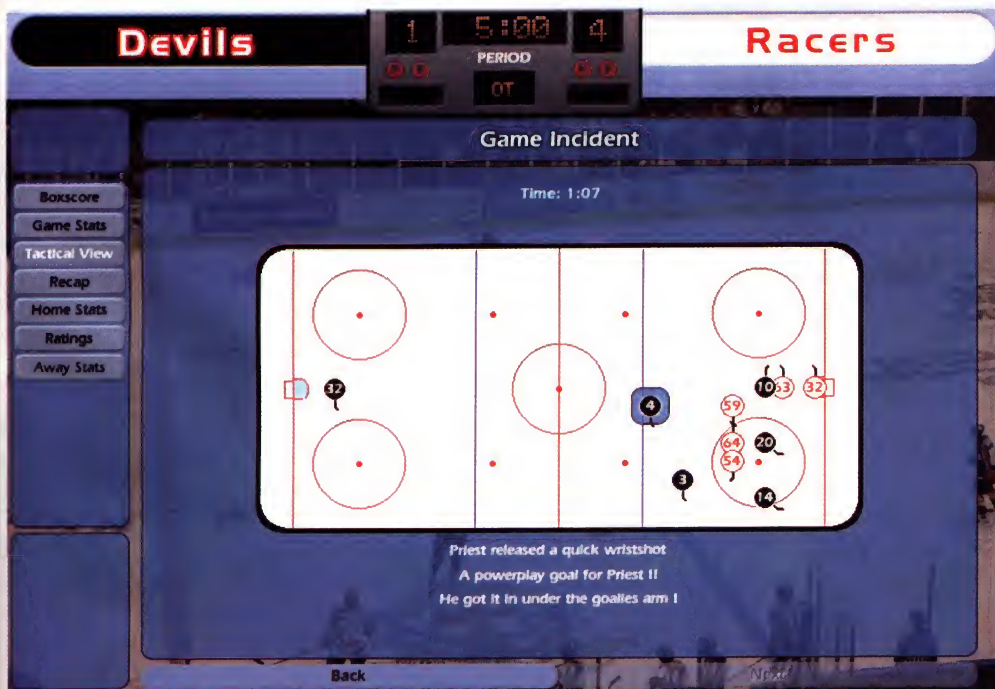
EMULATION ZONE
Gay gaming on the PC Engine?



WIN AN AVEIO PC!
Top games machine up for grabs



PC ZONE CHARTS
Latest charts and release dates



Hopefully the violent ice hockey fights will be represented in glorious numerical detail.



Eastside Hockey Manager is SI's first game for Sega.



The British Elite League. Not the Premiership.

SPORTS INTERACTIVE PUCK OFF!

SEGA SIGNS UP CHAMP MAN DEVELOPER'S *EASTSIDE HOCKEY MANAGER: FRANCHISE EDITION*

SPORTS INTERACTIVE, famous for the development of the incredibly popular *Championship Manager* football series for Eidos, has signed new game *Eastside Hockey Manager: Franchise Edition* with Japanese company Sega. *Eastside Hockey Manager* is a commercial version of a freeware program developed by hockey fanatic Risto 'Riz' Remes – and according to SI's managing director Miles Jacobson,

it'll have all the company's renowned gameplay depth and attention to detail.

"We've got a partnership with the Elite professional ice hockey league in the UK who have been helpful," says Jacobson. "What's more, there've been many hockey players who were fans of the freeware game giving advice to the team."

So why did SI decide to sign up with Sega? "We met with a lot of publishers, but

just clicked with Sega straight away," explains Jacobson. "It helped that they're a global publisher with experience in the hockey games field, but the initial month or so has been good fun, so we're hoping that it'll be a long partnership."

As for the *Championship Manager* series, because SI has left Eidos, the UK publisher owns the exclusive

rights to the lucrative brand. However, there are rumours that SI is to launch a rival series, known as *Football Manager*, in February/March. We'll bring you exclusive confirmation as and when we get it...

■ **Publisher:** Sega
■ **Developer:** Sports Interactive
■ **ETA:** Q1 2004
■ **Website:** www.sega-europe.com

German Love

IT'S TIME TO PUT A LITTLE LURVE IN YOUR HEART...

FORGET the latest scoop on *Doom 3* or *Half-Life 2*. Here at PC ZONE, we know what you really, really want – sex. We're right, aren't we? Well, your wish is our command. So here it is, the latest sizzling, XXX images from *Singles: Flirt Up Your Life*, the new love sim from Germany (so you know it's going to be H.O.T.).

Singles enables you to take control of the lives of two people – Linda and Mike – with the basic task of trying to get them to fancy each other and jump into bed. You have to keep track of their

emotional state, making sure they wash, eat, flirt, deal with work problems and have relationships with up to 16 other characters.

Singles: Flirt Up Your Life is basically a scaled-down version of *The Sims*, but with the luurve factor bumped up to Barry White-proportions. Expect a full frontal review soon.

■ **Publisher:** Deep Silver
■ **Developer:** Rotobee
■ **ETA:** Q1 2004
■ **Website:** www.singles-the-game.com



"Look at the polygons on that!" etc etc. *Singles* gets raunchy.

THIS SPACE FOR RENT

Advergaming is becoming a lucrative and often irritating presence in PC games. Pavel Barter asks if you'd like fries with that

MIKE MYERS summed it up in the '90s film *Wayne's World*: "We would never willingly sell sponsorship. It's our choice and it's the choice of the new generation," he said, while slurping Pepsi and wearing Adidas. The irony was delicious. Hollywood has been pestering us with tacky product placements ever since ET munched his way through 500 packets of Reese's Pieces. But the scourge of cinema has not been contained and now the last laugh might be on the games industry as it too slowly succumbs to the advertiser's dollar.

Want evidence? Well, how about *Splinter Cell*, which hooked up with Palm

Canadian *Sims* fan Tony Walsh, unimpressed by this move, roused gamers to hold protests outside *The Sims*' McDonald's. "I thought the idea was pretty stupid and wondered why a game that's supposedly all about freedom of choice was shoving Big Macs in people's faces. I came up with the idea of virtually picketing the in-game kiosks."

CASH INJECTION

For many mainstream developers, advergaming is an opportunity to be seized. Peter Molyneux's Lionhead team is currently "talking to a number of people" about product placement in its

SPECIAL REPORT

associated with anything other than a big hit. For the games industry, it's another potential source of revenue which is very welcome," says Molyneux.

After Lara Croft proved that she could shift a few bottles of Lucozade and still retain her credibility (currently on hold after a crap film and disappointing game), bigger advertisers have begun embracing PC games. During 2003, Intel put its name to *Sid Meier's Civilization III*, *Drome Racers*, *Neverwinter Nights*, *Unreal II: The Awakening* and *Enter The Matrix*, among many others.

"Certain titles work well in terms of advergaming," says Hitendra Naik, Intel's marketing manager for Entertainment and Games. "*Tron 2.0*, for example, was based inside a computer, so it made sense to include Intel Pentium 4

"McDonald's paid EA a seven-figure amount to set up virtual fast food franchises in *The Sims Online*"

products, and *Crazy Taxi*, whose passengers demanded to be taken to KFC, Levi's, Pizza Hut and Tower Records. *Darkened Skye* is one long Skittles commercial (unsurprising, since its creators were the culprits behind *M&M's: The Lost Formulas*). Then there's the sci-fi world of *PlanetSide* (invaded and conquered by CPU manufacturer Intel), while the *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* series lets you ollie over everything from Taco Bell to Nokia phones.

In one particularly publicised foray, McDonald's paid EA an undisclosed seven-figure amount to set up virtual fast food franchises in *The Sims Online*.

much anticipated sim entitled (rather fittingly) *The Movies*.

"It's a form of exposure for the advertiser which allows their product to be in front of the consumer for up to 40 hours, so obviously there's a great deal of interest on their side – but I'm sure they wouldn't want their products to be

The Mountie was eventually persuaded to stop picketing the virtual branch of McDonald's in *The Sims Online*.

Chill out, Dude.

Yes. Ma'am!



FIFA 2004's eye is on the ball, not its sponsors.



Making movies: Red Bull, the scourge of Mega City One.

branding within the game. In *The Sims Online*, the downloading of the Intel Pentium 4 PC enriched the characters' lives and affected the plot. We work with developers to see if we can somehow link branding within the plot of the game and if this proves difficult, we try and create a splash screen linking the characters to our traditional Intel logo such as in *Bionicle*."

SELLING OUT

But not everyone is so positive. Piranha Games executive producer Bryan Ekman came to regret his dalliance with corporate sponsorship. From the outset, the creator of *Die Hard: Nakatomi Plaza* wanted to make his game as true to the movie as possible, so actively sought the licences to include Zippo and Motorola products. As development progressed, these licences transformed into advertising deals (via publisher Fox Interactive), and he was required to add more in-game details than he originally wanted.



Darkened Skye: levitating Skittles were a common feature of everyday life in many medieval courts.

"I wouldn't consider an advertising deal involving money [again], and would only license the rights to use a product if we had complete control over its use. When money exchanges hands, creative control issues arise, and these invariably always interfere with the design of a game," he says.

If while playing *Nexagon Deathmatch* – a *Warcraft*-meets-*Rollerball* 3D RTS game – you successfully pound a rival to a pulp in front of a camera, you're rewarded with surrounding billboards captured in shot. The perfect excuse to advertise Acme Facial Hair Remover™ or some such brand? "We thought about placing advertisers on the billboards, but decided against it," admits Steve Milburn, Strategy First's director of marketing. "Gamers still get upset when there are blatant ads placed in their games. Also, because of the time period in which the game is set – thousands of years in the future – any product advertising would look false."

COMMERCIAL BREAK?

However, through the use of proper kits and sponsors, advertising can help authenticate some games. The *FIFA* and *Formula One* series readily tread this path, with companies like Reebok paying big bucks to emblazon its name on billboards (see *Madden NFL 2003*). Spoof products are also a common occurrence in the quest to emulate reality, found in everything from arcade classic *Hang-On*, which featured faux Shell and Marlboro logos, to *Max Payne*, whose titular hero reads *The New York Times* newspaper. Rockstar Games even went to the trouble of setting up websites for fictional companies mentioned in *GTA: Vice City*, including www.petsovernight.com.

Judge Dredd: Dredd vs Death managed to incorporate Red Bull into its plot with some degree of bona fide novelty; the drink is illegal in Mega City One and Dredd has to bust smugglers. Rebellion's Jason Kingsley explains: "Red Bull fits in with the subversive nature of the product and the ethos of the game, and if we hadn't used it, then we'd probably have had to make up our own power drink called Megbull or something. The company was excellent to work with and understood our issues regarding its product, and what's more we got several crates of the stuff, so the whole office smelled of Red Bull for about a week and we had a huge rise in productivity."

BUY ME! BUY ME!

From the average placement rate of around \$20,000, rising into millions for a game like *The Sims*, advergaming offers a tempting allure. While not all sectors of the industry agree with the principle, most contend that it will soon become routine for major brands to start pushing themselves in computer games the way they do in movies. But if it detracts from the gaming experience, is it really worth it?

Gamers such as Tony Walsh think not. "The worst thing you can do to a game is cheapen it by either forcing the player to 'experience the brand' as marketing sharks put it, or by rewarding the player for using the product. There need to be other options. If I don't want to drink that virtual Coke (or even look at it), my game experience should be the same as someone who drinks six virtual cans of the crap." **PCZ**

YOUR SHOUT! Do you think advertising in games adds authenticity and much-needed cash for developers, or does it cheapen and detract from the game itself? Write to PC Zone, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1V 0BQ



Billboard stupid? Do adverts for real products in games such as *NHL 2003* bring added authenticity or cold comfort?

AND NOW A WORD FROM OUR SPONSORS...

THE MOST BLATANT PC ADVERGAMING TIE-INS



THE TASTE TO DIE FOR

It's Coke for red and Pepsi for blue in *Unreal Tournament*'s legally dubious Cola Wars CTF map.



BEER NECESSITIES

Although it has only become profitable in recent years, advergaming is older than the hills. Arcade game *Tapper* (1983) had you serving Budweiser across a bar.

BUY AND SELL

The classically horrible, and unplayable, *Kool-Aid Man* was technically one long ad for a sickly American soft drink.



COWABUNGA, FOOD!

Corporate whores the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles spent their free time chowing down in Pizza Hut.



BRAND LEADERS

In *Wallace & Gromit in Project Zoo*, the mutt feeds on Jacob's biscuits. What's next, a Remington pump-action shotgun in *Doom 3*?



Jon Hare, consultant computer and video games designer

DEVELOPERS' QUESTION TIME

What PC games are you playing at the moment?

Dungeon Siege and *Sticky Balls* (a free puzzle game download developed by Zed Two's John Pickford).

What was the last videogame you managed to finish?

Heroes Chronicles: Master Of The Elements.

What is your favourite game of all time?

Scrabble.

Which achievements are you most proud of in your career?

Wizball, *Sensible Soccer*, *SDRR* (AKA *Sex n Drugs n Rock n Roll*, an ambitious, never-completed adult rock-music adventure game - Ed), two InDin developer of the year awards, six number one games.

Who do you most admire in the industry and why?

Shigeru Miyamoto (Japanese creator of the *Donkey Kong*, *Super Mario* and *Legend Of Zelda* games who was recently made the first entrant in the Golden Joystick Hall Of Fame - Ed). Best games designer in the world.

What has the PC contributed most to videogaming?

A consistently free platform.

What is your company's philosophy?

Reach for the stars that are within your grasp.

What's the best thing about your job?

It has moments of true inspiration and almost divine symmetry. When it all comes together it is incredibly satisfying because often with game design, you need to hold faith in your ideas even when everyone else around you is voicing their doubts.

What's the worst thing about your job?

People voicing their doubts... and not just trusting you.

What games are you working on at the moment?

As a consultant I am perpetually working on several titles that currently include a very exciting new one with Elixir Studios, some stuff for Virtual TV and an MMOG with Wicked Entertainment.

What's the next big thing in PC gaming?

A very heavyweight online-only global publisher with deep marketing pockets. It's coming soon...

HENDRIX LIVES!

VIETCONG: PURPLE HAZE PACK TO INCLUDE NEW FIST ALPHA EXPANSION



Vietnam: WWII with drugs and rock 'n' roll.



Multiplayer includes a new co-op mode.

ORIGINALLY PLANNED for release back in October, the *Vietcong* expansion *Fist Alpha* will now be available to buy at the end of January as a standalone box or bundled with the original game in a special package called *Vietcong: Purple Haze*.

"The name *Fist Alpha* refers to a unique squad of US Special Forces"



The name *Fist Alpha* refers to a unique squad of US Special Forces, and will feature seven new single-player missions

set during the construction of the base at Nui Pek. Developer Pteradon has included more detailed foliage for extra covert operations, new weapons including bayonets and machetes, and the ability to call for air strikes.

Eight new multiplayer maps and a comprehensive level editor will also ensure you keep fighting that little bit longer, before hurriedly hitching a helicopter ride out from a Vietnam rooftop.

PC ZONE has also learned that the brand new *Vietcong* game due for release in April 2005 will be known as *Vietcong: Tet Offensive*. We'll hopefully have more news on this and a full review of *Fist Alpha* next issue.

■ **Publisher:** Gathering
■ **Developer:** Pteradon
■ **ETA:** January
■ **Website:** www.gathering.com

Greece Lightning

BUILD ANCIENT EMPIRES WITH NEW STRATEGY TITLE SPARTAN

UK DEVELOPMENT company Slitherine Strategies (previously responsible for *Legion*) has announced its latest project. *Spartan* is a turn-based strategy game set around 400BC, the time of the powerful Ancient Greek civilisation, and lets you take command of one of 100 different nations, each with varying resources and technologies that you can trade on a constantly changing stock market.

You can use diplomacy or undertake spying missions to help seal valuable pacts with troublesome neighbours, but of course warmongering is always more fun - ask George Bush. Battles take place on a fully 3D map, with armies consisting of over 40 different units, plus there's a large range of weaponry available.

Lead designer Iain McNeil is a double world champion at tabletop strategy

games and assures gamers unhappy with the "frenetic click-fest of normal RTS titles should love *Spartan*. Think *Civilization* with a 3D battle engine..." Check out the website for more info.

■ **Publisher:** Just Play
■ **Developer:** Slitherine Strategies
■ **ETA:** March
■ **Website:** www.justplaynow.com



What have the Greeks ever done for us?



"We've nothing to lose but our hummus!"

STAYING ALIVE

DISCO TURNS EVIL IN ZOOTFLY'S INSANE SHOOTER *HOLLOW*

IF YOU THOUGHT the first-person shooter was getting as stale as a church fete scone, look no further than *Hollow*. Developed by Slovenian company ZootFly, *Hollow* is a mad blaster set in a weird, '70s-themed alternative universe where WWII never happened. "Sure, our parents and grandparents survived the war, but we survived the Disco!" says CEO and lead games designer Bostjan Troha.

You play as Tyler Kilmore (nice), an expelled US journalist who comes back to the country of Centrope after five long years to reunite with his fiancée, only to be

"Sure, our parents and grandparents survived the war, but we survived the Disco!"

arrested for her murder. "The game takes place against the background of a bizarre Disco-totalitarian state, where cops have platform shoes and sideburns," continues Troha. "But you'll face other foes such as the awesome Krux commandos and Draco Legion Special Forces. Tyler has to literally go all the way to Hell to try to rescue his girl, unravelling a primeval mystery that will rewrite the history of mankind."

Hollow has a fearsome and funny armoury including the usual shotguns and flamethrowers, as well as a gravity grenade, which can be set to crush enemies by either pulling or pushing all objects in its radius, and the DeBoner gun, which reduces unfortunate opponents to a floppy mess. As for gizmos, Tyler has access to a PolyVisor that lets him view NPCs' colourful auras to tell who is the most dangerous individual in a group, and the ChronoFreeze that lets him stop or even reverse time to replay tricky sections. Multiplayer games for up to 64 players are also promised, with 15 different maps and various (land, water, air) vehicles. We'll have more on *Hollow* very soon.



■ Publisher: TBC ■ Developer: ZootFly
■ ETA: Q4 2004 ■ Website: games.zootfly.com



"Don't blame it on sunshine - blame it on the Uzi..."



"I will survive..."



"Stop, in the name of love..."

PC ZONE'S FREE PLAY!

YOUR REGULAR ONE-STOP GUIDE TO FREE PC GAMES!



ACHTUNG VIEWERS!

Welcome to Free Play, an excellent new regular section of PC ZONE in which we bring you the very best in free PC gaming. It's probably worth

taking a minute to define our terms - for the purposes of this column, a 'free' game is one you can obtain in its entirety without paying for it in advance. Therefore shareware games that give you a few levels for free, but only make the whole game available when you pay for it, are NOT eligible for inclusion here. On the other hand, games you can download/play in their entirety, but are subsequently invited to pay for if you enjoyed them, ARE allowed - naturally, we strongly encourage you to play fair with such games and make the requested donation if you feel the game is worth it.

But here we're mostly going to be focusing on games that are completely and permanently free - those that some enormously generous soul has created and distributed for nothing other than the sheer philanthropic joy of sharing them with fellow gamers and to fill Free Play's heart with a warm and glowing love for humanity.

Such a game is our first offering, the glorious *Warning Forever*. An all-boss freeware shoot 'em up

from Japan, *Warning Forever* offers something that's been sadly missing from shooting games ever since *R-Type* - giant enemy ships you can blow up piece by piece, rather than by pouring fire into one weak spot for hours until the whole thing illogically explodes. There's far more gameplay cleverness to discover in *Warning Forever* than we have space to tell you about here, so just dive right in, admire the aesthetic and design elegance, and then destroy it. With bullets.

URL: www.excellentcontent.com/freeplay/WarningForever.zip



Warning Forever - Ikaruga eat your heart out.

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EMULATION ZONE

BREAKING NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF EMULATION, WITH RETRO REANIMATOR STUART CAMPBELL

WHEN IS A PC NOT A PC? WHEN IT'S A PC ENGINE



A bonus section from the *R-Type Complete CD*.

ONE OF gaming's greatest false dawns was the advent of the CD-based game system in the early '90s. Faced with the prospect of a medium capable of holding 650MB of game data (rather than the 8MB of a typical console cartridge or the 2MB of an average Amiga title), the industry worked itself into a proper froth. There were even magazines devoted solely to software published on CD (regardless of hardware format), and everywhere was full of the

thrilling possibilities of the new medium. Not least the dramatic fall in software prices that was promised as a result of ditching expensive chip-filled ROM carts in favour of dirt-cheap CDs. When will we learn, eh?

Of course, when it actually happened, the CD revolution was rubbish. Consoles like the CD32 offered nothing but hasty shovelware ports of existing Amiga games, usually without even taking advantage of the extra



Arse attack: the seriously tonto *God Panic*.

controller buttons. This meant that you still had to use "up" to accelerate in racing games or jump in platformers. While it brought a few new hardware capabilities (most notably a SNES-style 3D scaling and rotation function), the Sega Mega CD saw hardly any games make use of it. Which wasn't that surprising, since it cost £300 and nobody in their right mind bought one – setting a standard for hardware flops that would later sink Sega as a console-maker altogether.

But one machine did see a big benefit from the advent of the CD, and that machine was the PC Engine. The cult Japanese and US console had been overshadowed by the more powerful Mega Drive and SNES, but its CD drive brought it up to a par with its bigger brothers, and publishers (relatively speaking) flocked to take advantage, bringing a whole slew of original CD-only games to the platform. Plus, they also produced updates like *R-Type*, giving the game a beautiful new soundtrack, extra sections and stylish between-level cut-scenes explaining the plot for the first time.

Games like the *Summer Carnival* series (released for and named after a yearly competition event), FMV detective whodunnit *JB Harold In: Murder Club*, rock-hard *Super Sprint* clone *Motoroad MC* and the extremely rude manga shooter *Steam Hearts* all graced

the Engine, and are now some of the rarest and most sought-after titles by hardcore games collectors.

Emu Zone has a soft spot for the wildly surreal shooting antics of games like *God Panic* and *Star Parodia* (a *Parodius*-style spoof on the *Star Soldier* series). However, it's hard to go wrong with PCE CD games, with the platform upholding perhaps the



most consistent standards of release quality of any games console ever. Class-leading PCE emulator MagicEngine handles CD games beautifully, either original disc or a ripped image, so now you've got no excuse for missing out on some of the most obscure, but finest, gaming ever.

LINKS

www.magicengine.com
www.zeograd.com/ – Hu-Go, alternative PCE emu
www.pceengine.com.br/CDS.htm – find out more about PCE CD games

EMULATION OF THE MONTH

CHO ANIKI (SUPER BIG BROTHERS) PC ENGINE CD, 1992

This title led Emu Zone to uncover a whole little gaming subculture which had previously escaped its attention. The *Cho Aniki* brand covers several games – for example, there's a fighting game on the SNES and an RPG on the Wonder Swan – though almost never two in the same genre. But this is the first, and the culture of which we talk is the culture which dare not speak its name – flagrantly homosexual videogaming. If you thought *Soul Calibur* was camp (and if not, you must reckon Graham Norton's akin to a rugby player), you ain't seen nothing yet.

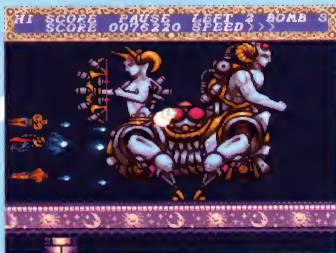
Cho Aniki is a gloriously over-the-top scrolling shooter, and you play a muscular guy in tights and a cape. The various stages of the game are strewn with gigantic near-naked bodybuilders and the music is a charming mix of Japanese operatic and Latin carnival sambas.

You can also pick up *Nemesis*-style drone power-ups – Dolph Lundgren-style spinning hunks in pale blue pants.

The best bit is the Continue sequence, where the countdown is illustrated by oiled dudes throwing some very Village People shapes, but all the way through the game exhibits a fantastic sense of joy, and throws in some pretty decent shooting action to match.

LINKS

www.pceengine.com.br/choaniki/choaniki.htm



The least gay pic of *Cho Aniki* ever.

"One machine did see a big benefit from the advent of the CD, and that machine was the PC Engine"

WHAT IS EMULATION?



By installing an emulator, you can run games that were programmed for different platforms – such as coin-ops – in their original form. The games come in the form of a ROM (Read Only Memory) that you load into the emulator to run. There are legal issues though, and unless you own the original game, it's often against the law to download a ROM. For that reason, we can't give you links to ROMs, though we can give you links to the emulators themselves.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

OSAMA BIN LADEN is to star in a sick new virtual reality computer game. The hirsute cave dweller has been recreated using computer wizardry and will appear in *America's 10 Most Wanted*, the final levels of which require players to hunt him down like a dog and bring him to justice. The nine other evil-doers are currently being finalised with the aid of the FBI website, and are not believed to include **George Bush**, **Tony Blair** or **Eamonn Holmes**. The game will feature mind-warping music from gun-wielding gangster rappers **So Solid Crew**, whose faces will also be clearly visible. And in a move that has been slammed as "inappropriate", the game will boast **CBS** reporter **Dan Rather** commentating over licensed **CNN** news footage of various terrorism-related atrocities. Reacting to widespread condemnation and attempting desperately to fuel the fires of controversy, publisher **System 3** boss **Mark Cale** spat: "There's a danger that *America's 10 Most Wanted* will provoke the hysterical outburst we're used to from the sensationalist mainstream media, but the fact is it draws from a very real concern. It's no different from gamers playing as soldiers in more traditional war games, just with a subject that's very contemporary. It's worth remembering that the game doesn't actually encourage players to kill these individuals. It's about capturing them alive." Bin Laden is not expected to attend the launch.

The cheese eating surrender monkeys of **France** have once again buckled under the superior firepower of their near-neighbours on this sceptred isle. The crushing defeat came about in the inaugural Anglo-French **Counter-Strike** championship, with the plucky British **Four-Kings** team comprehensively destroying the Gallic buffoons of Armateam during a sold-out LAN party at **Oxford Brookes University**. Four-Kings captain **Marc Mangiacapra** bragged: "We were confident of beating them from the start because we've put in a lot of preparation on the maps." A return match in Paris has already been slated, and for those who couldn't be present at the historic victory (which was attended by some 100 people), **Intel** is preparing a movie of the event. Let's not get carried away...

"The game doesn't actually encourage players to kill these individuals. It's about capturing them alive"

VIVE LA REPUBLIC!

FIRST SCREENS FROM STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO

OUR FAITH IN games from a galaxy far, far away has recently been restored by *Knights Of The Old Republic*, so it's with a rather large dollop of excitement that we can exclusively reveal the next two big LucasArts *Star Wars* games.

Star Wars: Republic Commando is a dark, militaristic squad-based first-person shooter set after *Episode II* and before the forthcoming *Episode III* movie, where you fight as a member of an elite Republic Special Operations Unit. You'll have the chance to

fight in a host of brutal and foreboding areas of the *Star Wars* galaxy, including the insectoid-infested ringed planet of Geonosis from *Episode II* in single and multiplayer games.

The other big LucasArts news is that the company has also announced that a new *Battlefield 1942*-style multiplayer title – *Star Wars Battlefront* – will be released later this year (developed by Pandemic Studios). Don't miss the full preview next issue!

■ Publisher: Activision
■ Developer: LucasArts
■ ETA: Summer 2004
■ Website: www.lucasarts.com



LucasArts is using the latest Unreal engine for state-of-the-art graphics.



Star Wars: Republic Commando may include characters from *Episode III*.

Bonnie Scot's LAN

CODEMASTERS' COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04 GOES ONLINE FOR PC

THE MOST respected rally game in the world is coming to PC this March, and we've just been given a batch of exclusive screenshots for a champagne podium celebration.

Colin McRae Rally 04, starring the haggis o' misery himself, could be the best outing for the series yet, with over 20 rally cars such as the Subaru Impreza and Ford Puma, and eight locations including the UK, Spain, Greece and Japan.

Online and LAN multiplayer options enable up to eight players to compete in co-operative or competitive races, and the PC version also has improved graphics and camera replays. Watch out for a full hands-on preview next issue.

■ Publisher: Codemasters
■ Developer: Codemasters
■ ETA: March
■ Website: www.codemasters.com/colinmcrae04



Ah, summer in Scotland.



Driving School's Maureen has replaced Nicky Grist.

Hog Heaven

SEGA ANNOUNCES SONIC ADVENTURE DX DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR THE PC



Sonic the Hedgehog – the true lord of the rings.

SEGA'S ICONIC blue hedgehog is again making a spindash for the PC, with the launch of *Sonic Adventure DX Director's Cut* early in 2004. First released on the now-defunct Dreamcast console back in 1999, the 'DX Director's Cut' bit was tacked on when the game was re-launched on the Nintendo GameCube earlier this year, adding a new mission mode and unlockable 'classic' Sonic games.

The PC version also contains all of *Sonic Adventure's* six characters, 50 colourful platforming levels, huge boss battles against Dr Robotnik's cronies and addictive mini-games – including the Pokemon-like Chao creature breeding and racing. However, the graphics are now in super hi-res and those golden collectable rings have been polished until they gleam. All being well, we'll have the full review of *Sonic Adventure DX Director's Cut* next month.

■ Publisher: Sega
■ Developer: Sega
■ ETA: Q1 2004
■ Website: www.sega-europe.com



Good Cop. Bad Cop.

GOOD COP

UT 2004 – a genuine move forward for the excellent FPS series with new combat modes and the addition of vehicles. Check out the review on page 60.



2004 – a whole new year of PC games such as *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2* to play!

Christmas and New Year parties. One recent debauched **PC ZONE** evening resulted in a champagne fight in a hotel room at 6am. Class.

England meeting Wales and Northern Ireland in the World Cup qualifiers for our own mini-UK footie tournament.

BAD COP



Christmas and New Year deadlines. The festive jolliness soon dissipates when you've a week less to make a magazine.

Dave Woods finding out that his new computer already has hundreds of viruses. Well, if you will go looking at those dodgy sites Dave...

Good Cop: Eddie Murphy **Bad Cop: Nick Nolte** (from *48 Hours* and *Another 48 Hours*) – suggested by Jim Sleightholm, Edinburgh. Send in your ideas for next month's Good Cop and Bad Cop to win a PC ZONE goodie-bag!

PRO EVO ONLINE

WE UNCOVER PES3'S ONLINE AMBITIONS IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

SHINGO "SEABASS" Takatsuka is the eccentric producer of the legendary *Pro Evolution Soccer* series for Konami's TYO studio based in Tokyo. We gained exclusive access to the great man to ask about *PES3* on PC, his plans for an online *PES* and the future of the definitive arcade footie franchise.

PCZ How difficult was it to bring *Pro Evolution Soccer* to the PC?

TAKATSUKA It was quite difficult to convert because Konami didn't have the PC technology background in the past – so to even reproduce the same game as the PlayStation 2 was tricky. We decided to

PCZ Can we expect *PES4* to have online compatibility?

TAKATSUKA I'd love to announce online for next year – and it's coming closer. In fact, *PES* could be online on PC before the PS2 version.

PCZ What was the thinking behind the new shooting system in *PES3*? It now seems harder to squeeze off a shot, particularly if you're under pressure from a defender...

TAKATSUKA The ball movement – the physical movement of the football – has been experimented with. This means that

have *PES* fully-licensed. It's not the R&D side, but the political company side. The future is bright for us in that area."

In other *PES* news, a group of amateur enthusiasts have released an unofficial patch for *PES3* that gives you all the proper team names, player names and strips – check out www.proevolutionline.com for further details.

"Online is coming closer – PES could be online for PC before the PS2 version"

bring it to PC because we wanted to go multi-platform. Also, there are a lot of merits to the PC platform – the network on the PC is more established and stronger, so we can experiment more to achieve our dream of being an online football title. Unfortunately, this version doesn't have LAN or online play; we're just trying to experiment. But since we're thinking of having a game server and going online, this PC area is very much a key to our future plans.

as in real football, when you shoot at the right time, you can have a very low and fast drive shot – similar to what Paul Scholes does for England.

PCZ Finally, will *PES4* have completely fully-licensed teams?

TAKATSUKA Yes, we're hoping. We can tell you that it won't get worse! We're already acquiring more licenses for this game and the team's personal dream is to



Shingo "Seabass" Takatsuka – the main man behind *Pro Evo Soccer 3*.



David James shows why he's England's no.17.



In space, no-one can hear you scream "Ooh, that looks pretty..."

SPACE WAR



Nexus looks cool, but it'll have to be extra-good to beat *X2: The Threat*.



GALAXY ANDROMEDA BECOMES NEXUS AS AN AUTUMN 2004 RELEASE DATE IS CONFIRMED

DUTCH PUBLISHER HD Interactive has picked up the Mithis-developed space strategy title *Nexus* from German publisher CDV. The game started life as *Imperium Galactica III*, before changing its name to *Galaxy Andromeda*, but will now be known as *Nexus* due to licensing issues.

Nexus is an ambitious sci-fi RTS game, where you have the considerable task of ridding Earth of a nasty alien menace over 30 missions. As a human player, you must learn about the strengths and weaknesses of various alien species, studying their ships, weapons and tactics for battle.

The fully-3D space conflicts in *Nexus* take place in real-time, but you can pause the game to give commands to your fleet of ships and manage their weapons, shields and energy levels. As well as these rather scorching visuals, Mithis also promises that there'll be plenty of multiplayer options for

online space assaults. We'll give you more news when we get it.

- **Publisher:** HD Interactive
- **Developer:** Mithis
- **ETA:** September
- **Website:** www.hdinteractive.nl



"Let me put it this way... If I was dying of a rare disease and he was the only one who had the cure, I would commit suicide first before seeking his help."

Running With Scissors' outspoken CEO Vince Desi on his relationship with the president of Postal 2's publisher Whiptail. We guess that the recent split wasn't too amicable then...

"You have to take the battery out to put the game in! You have to take the battery out to put the game in!"

An angry and animated Phill Jupitus at the Golden Joystick Awards, speaking about the Nokia N-Gage game phone/Cornish pasty, which has a rather fatal design flaw.

"You won't be laughing when you get a 'cock in your face!"

Disc editor Suzy Wallace to editor Woods after he mentioned that he thought the shuttlecock-bashing sport badminton was just a girl's game.

TIP TOP TABLETOP

RELIC ANNOUNCES WARHAMMER 40,000 RTS DAWN OF WAR



A Space Marine storms into battle in concept art from Relic's new futuristic RTS.

LEGIONS OF Space Marines, Daemonhunters, Necrons and Tyranids will soon be storming towards your PC with the announcement of a new real-time strategy game from the makers of *Homeworld 2*.

Warhammer 40,000: Dawn Of War is set in the futuristic, sci-fi universe created by Games Workshop, which features

various human and alien factions both vying for ultimate power.

Developed by respected developer Relic, *Dawn Of War* promises intense combat based on the tabletop battles with hand-painted miniature models that have made the *Warhammer 40,000* universe so popular around the globe. Due to be released this autumn, our only hope is that

Dawn of War turns out better than Kuju Entertainment's very average *Warhammer*-themed first-person shooter *Fire Warrior*. Only time will tell...

- **Publisher:** THQ
- **Developer:** Relic
- **ETA:** Autumn 2004
- **Website:** www.relic.com

COMPETITION

WIN HUGE EMPIRE INTERACTIVE GIVEAWAY

WIN AN AVEIO PC WORTH £1,500 AND COLLECTOR'S EDITIONS OF *GHOST MASTER* AND *WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES*!

FIRST PRIZE: AVEIO PC plus Collector's Edition copies of *Warrior Kings: Battles* and *Ghost Master*

RUNNERS-UP PRIZES: Nine Collector's Edition copies of *Ghost Master* and *Warrior Kings: Battles*

Small and beautifully formed, the AVEIO PC is everything you could want in a gaming machine. Not only will it run the next-gen classics of 2004 to their full potential, but its compact size means that more desk-space can be saved for coffee mugs, used tissues and general gaming debris. And the machine is potentially all yours

thanks to the rather generous peeps at Empire Interactive.

Bundled with the state-of-the-art computer is the Collector's Edition of *Ghost Master*, the spooktacular frighten 'em up we gave 87% a few months back, along with the Collector's Edition of fantasy stat-fest *Warrior Kings: Battles*.

In *Ghost Master*, you have the joy of ordering your team of spooks around haunted houses and scaring the bejesus out of the living. With the Collector's Edition, you'll get a *Ghost Master* 'Making Of' documentary, the soundtrack, a bonus scenario and loads more. *Warrior Kings*, meanwhile, arrives packed with a set of art prints to admire while you order your druids, cavalry and golems into battle against the enemy.

One lucky winner will receive the delicate monster that is the AVEIO PC, plus a copy of *Ghost Master* and *Warrior Kings: Battles*. And if that weren't enough, nine more happy runners-up will be getting the

two Collector's Edition games crowbarred through their letter boxes.

All you have to do for a chance to win is answer the ridiculously easy question on the right, stick your answer on a postcard with your name, age and address and send it to:

Empire Interactive competition
PC ZONE magazine
9 Dallington Street
London
EC1V 0BQ

■ Terms and conditions: only entries with all the questions completed and received before the closing date will be entered into the prize draw. Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. And all that. Phew!

Question:

What is the name of the evil woman 'Ghost Master' that Venkman and co. battle at the end of comedy hit *Ghostbusters*?

A: Zool
B: Tool
C: Stewart



AVEIO PC SPECS:

- Processor: AMD Athlon XP 3000
- Memory: 512MB
- Graphics: GeForce FX 5600 128MB
- Multimedia: DVD multi-format writer
- Monitor Size: 17-inch



CHARTS

In association with **VIRGIN MEGASTORES**

Your one-stop guide to game releases past, present and future. Whether a game is lost, looming or selling like sim-cakes, this is where you'll find it



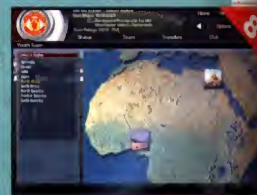


It may look simple, but *Championship Manager* will always be the footie game that stole our hearts and minds (and wives and girlfriends). With up-to-date teams and a couple of bug fixes, if you've never delved into its delights, now's your chance.

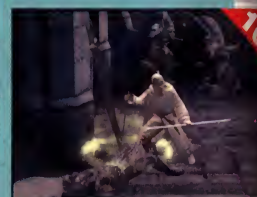


The *Need For Speed* series has always been functional at best, but now it's come up with a game that's truly great. With a frightening sense of speed, a superb soundtrack and a vast assortment of real-life engine mods, its chart success is well deserved.

	TITLE	PUBLISHER	SCORE
1 NEW	CHAMP MAN: SEASON 03/04	EIDOS	90%
2 ▼	THE SIMS: MAKIN' MAGIC	EA	55%
3 ▼	CALL OF DUTY	ACTIVISION	94%
4 ▲	THE SIMS: DOUBLE DELUXE	EA	67%
5 NEW	NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND	EA	85%
6 ▼	MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE	ROCKSTAR	93%
7 ▼	FIFA FOOTBALL 2004	EA	81%
8 NEW	TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2004	EA	48%
9 ▼	THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR	EA	59%
10 NEW	THE LORD OF THE RINGS: ROTK	EA	68%



Why? Why? Why would anyone consider buying a royal steamer like this? Spread the word that the only management game to buy contains the letters C and M and the numbers 03 and 04. None of your 'Total Club Mega League Manager' nonsense.



What better way to celebrate the climactic end of the most epic, beautiful and gob-smacking collection of fantasy films than ham-fistedly slamming your hands into your keyboard again and again? *ROTK* is pretty, top fun, but not too clever – like Arwen.

YOUR SHOUT

Have your say at www.pczone.co.uk

Not surprising to see *Championship Manager* topping the charts – even though they're charging £30 for a seasonal update. To think that everyone moans when EA does this, but CM gets away with it...
DarthMorbus

Pro Evolution Soccer 3 and *Hidden & Dangerous 2* aren't there! That's a key reason why robots shouldn't be left in charge of typing up the charts...
Spudy2000

We haven't had an epic game hold the top of the charts for a long period – which you would have expected either *Max Payne 2* or *Call Of Duty* to do. *Half-Life 2* and *Doom 3* may be the only games to hold off *The Sims*.
deadmartyr



TOP 10

1.	CHAMPIONSHIP MANGER: SEASON 03/04	EIDOS
2.	MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE	ROCKSTAR
3.	CALL OF DUTY	ACTIVISION
4.	THE LORD OF THE RINGS: ROTK	EA
5.	HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2	GATHERING
6.	FIFA FOOTBALL 2004	EA
7.	STAR WARS GALAXIES	ACTIVISION
8.	HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED	MICROSOFT
9.	URU: AGES BEYOND MYST	UBISOFT
10.	RAILROAD TYCOON 3	GATHERING

COMPETITION



Win the entire Virgin Top 10!

Once again, **PC ZONE** and **Virgin** have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Virgin Top 10 (see left, and try not to drool). All you have to do to enter is answer the following:

QUESTION: Which actor supplies the voice for Treebeard the Ent in *The Lord Of The Rings* flicks?

Send your answers on a postcard to:

PC ZONE Chart Compo Issue 138, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1V 0BQ. Closing date: February 4, 2004

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- Please indicate whether you are a current subscriber to **PC ZONE**.

For general competition terms and conditions, turn to page 7.

INCOMING!

PC ZONE'S RELEASE SCHEDULE FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. ALL APPROXIMATE MONTHLY DATES ARE CORRECT AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

JANUARY

LORDS OF THE REALM III	VU GAMES
TOM CLANCY'S RAVEN SHIELD: ATHENA SWORD	UBISOFT
VIETCONG: FIST ALPHA	GATHERING

FEBRUARY

ALPHA BLACK ZERO: INTREPID PROTOCOL	PLAYLOGIC
BREED	CDV
CRAZY TAXI 3: HIGH ROLLER	EMPIRE
DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR	EIDOS
GANGLAND	WHIPTAIL
HORIZONS: EMPIRE OF ISTARIA	ATARI
JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING	NOVALOGIC
KNIGHTS OF THE TEMPLE	TDK
SACRED	ASCARON
X2: THE THREAT	DEEP SILVER
UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004	ATARI

MARCH

ARMED & DANGEROUS	ACTIVISION
COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04	CODEMASTERS
DRAKE	VU GAMES
FAR CRY	UBISOFT
PACIFIC WARRIORS 2: DOGFIGHT!	4AM
PAINKILLER	DREAMCATCHER
POOL PARADISE	IGNITION
RACE DRIVER 2: THE ULTIMATE RACING SIMULATOR	CODEMASTERS
RICHARD BURNS RALLY	SCI
SOLDNER - SECRET WARS	BIG BEN
SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	UBISOFT

Q1

BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM	EA
BLOWOUT	VU GAMES
CODENAME: PANZERS	CDV
DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN - TEAM SABRE	NOVALOGIC
HALF-LIFE 2	VU GAMES
HITMAN: CONTRACTS	EIDOS
KNIGHTSHIFT	DEEP SILVER
LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE	EIDOS
MEDAL OF HONOR: PACIFIC ASSAULT	EA
PERIMETER	CODEMASTERS
THE SIMS 2	EA
VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE - BLOODLINES	ACTIVISION

Q2

GROUND CONTROL 2: OPERATION EXODUS	VU GAMES
KNIGHTS OF HONOUR	SUNFLOWERS
RESTRICTED AREA	4AM
THIEF 3	EIDOS
THE MOVIES	ACTIVISION

Q3

DRAGON EMPIRES	CODEMASTERS
DRIV3R	ATARI
EVERQUEST II	UBISOFT
EVIL GENIUS	VU GAMES
SAM & MAX: FREELANCE POLICE	ACTIVISION
STALKER: OBLIVION LOST	THQ
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH	EA
WARTIME COMMAND: BATTLE FOR EUROPE 1939-45	CODEMASTERS
WORLD OF WARCRAFT	VU GAMES

Q4

ADVENT RISING	VU GAMES
BLACK & WHITE 2	EA
BLOODRAYNE 2	VU GAMES
COSSACKS II: NAPOLEONIC WAR	CDV
LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE	VU GAMES
THE MATRIX ONLINE	UBISOFT
MIDDLE-EARTH ONLINE	VU GAMES
ROME: TOTAL WAR	ACTIVISION
TRIBES: VENGEANCE	VU GAMES

TBA 2004

DOOM 3	ACTIVISION
DUNGEON SIEGE 2	MICROSOFT
MEN OF VALOR: VIETNAM	VU GAMES
SID MEIER'S PIRATES	ATARI
ULTIMA X: ODYSSEY	EA
WARHAMMER ONLINE	SEGA

MISSING IN ACTION

The war's not over until the last game comes home...

HARPOON IV

THE GREAT will-it-won't-it Ubisoft release, *Harpoon IV* has just had the sword of Damocles pierce its shiny neck. After three years floating around, it seems the publishing big boys finally ran out of patience. A third-party may take up the reins, but don't get your hopes up too much.

■ Publisher: Ubisoft
■ Developer: Ubisoft/Ultimation
■ ETA: KIA



DRIV3R



W3 CAN now confirm that *Driv3r*, r3c3ntly known as th3 mor3 r3sp3ctabl3 *Driver 3*, will d3finit3ly b3 coming out on th3 PC. Aside from the ridiculous 'let's get down with the kids' title, many doomsayers claimed it would be a console-only title. Not true. We'll just get it a few months later than everyone else.

■ Publisher: Atari
■ Developer: Reflections
■ ETA: Summer
■ Website: uk.atari.com

FALLOUT 3

IN A dramatic move that has made our resident staff writer Will ridiculously angry (and emotionally dead), Black Isle Studios has been shut down and its unannounced project, which we all knew was *Fallout 3*, has been shoved forcibly to the sidelines. Another RPG legend bites the dust. You maniacs! Damn you!

■ Publisher: Interplay
■ Developer: Black Isle Studios
■ ETA: KIA



US TOP 10

1. THE SIMS: MAKIN' MAGIC	EA
2. CALL OF DUTY	ACTIVISION
3. STAR WARS: KOTOR	ACTIVISION
4. THE SIMS: DOUBLE DÉLUXE	EA
5. ZOO TYCOON: COMPLETE COLLECTION	MICROSOFT
6. AGE OF MYTHOLOGY	MICROSOFT
7. HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED	MICROSOFT
8. BACKYARD BASKETBALL 2004	ATARI
9. URU: AGES BEYOND MYST	UBISOFT
10. DUNGEON SIEGE: LEGENDS OF ARANNA	MICROSOFT



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH

The battle for the longest game title is about to begin...

WITH THE final instalment of Peter Jackson's epic trilogy currently packing cinemas, here's a timely opportunity to feast your eyes on the game that will be keeping Tolkien addicts off the streets later on this year. Using a modified version of the *Generals* engine, *The Battle For Middle-Earth* takes the *Lord Of The Rings* universe into the RTS arena in impressive style.

Stunning as these shots are, the real magic of the game is only apparent when you see it moving, with literally hundreds of troops on screen at once, recreating the huge battle scenes that proved to be the cornerstones of the movies. Selecting

either good or evil campaigns, the chance to wield power over vast armies in battlefields taken directly from the big screen is one that any self-respecting Orc-fancier should already be salivating over.

And thanks to EA's exclusive licensing agreement with New Line Cinema, the game is set to come replete with digital assets and footage from all three films, as well as exclusive voice-overs from the actual actors. Wizard!

- Publisher: Electronic Arts
- Developer: Electronic Arts
- ETA: Summer 2004
- Website: lordoftherings.eagames.com





ARMED & DANGEROUS

Stand well back – Planet Moon's insane new blast 'em up is primed and ready to blow...

LAUGH-OUT-LOUD humour is a rare commodity in games these days, especially when it's married with compelling and inventive gameplay. But that's exactly the exotic mix Planet Moon Studios has dedicated itself to for the past decade. Its humour may be based primarily around sheep-shagging and silly Scottish accents, but around here that's no bad thing, especially when sprinkled artfully through some of the most frantic, high-explosive carnage since *It's A Knockout*.

Planet Moon's latest effort, *Armed & Dangerous*, is without doubt its silliest to date. Eschewing the tactical bits of *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*, *A&D* is pure, unremitting action, bristling with mad weapons and boasting a body count in the thousands. Giant robots, anti-gravity bombs, kamikaze penguins – and that's just in the first ten minutes.

The game has already hit the shelves in the States, but if you can hold back from the temptation of grey market imports, the UK version will be out late Feb. It's already getting a rapturous reception across the pond, so stay tuned for our exclusive UK review and verdict next issue. In the meantime, check out the exclusive playable demo on our cover discs for a rousing bit of no-holds-barred gunplay.

- Publisher: Activision
- Developer: Planet Moon Studios
- ETA: Feb 27 2004
- Website: www.lucasarts.com





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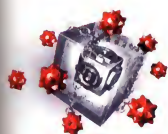
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The cat spies a mouse.

THE DETAILS

PUBLISHER Ubisoft
DEVELOPER Ubisoft
WEBSITE www.splintercell.com
ETA March

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- New single-player adventure, spanning eight missions
- Genius four-player multiplayer mode
- Improved difficulty settings, weapons and gadgets
- Free-roaming outdoor environments



Spy vs spy...

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

Sam Fisher is back in a new stealth adventure, and this time he's brought some friends. *Rhianna Pratchett* puts him through his paces



WHEN SAM FISHER slunk out of the shadows 12 months ago, he was greeted with open arms and the whirring of thousands of PC disc trays. With his arsenal of weaponry and gadgets, gravelly voice and no-nonsense attitude, Sam was someone who clearly got the job done and didn't need a daft, double-entendre name to do it.

A year later and our intrepid hero Sam is back in the fray once more in *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*, the long-awaited follow-up that polishes many areas of the original, as well as adding a brand new online element. This time around, it's the year 2006 and Sam's mission is to track the activities of the notorious terrorist leader Sadono. It's a job that will take him from the enclosed, darkened streets of Jerusalem, and see him journeying through



Not another on-rails shooter...



"Quick, he's spotted you - act natural."



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CV



UBISOFT

French developer/publisher Ubisoft has had a golden run of games over the past 18 months, and now ranks as a true industry heavyweight. With studios in Canada, France, the US, China and elsewhere, the company has plenty of resources to draw on, and is not averse to shuffling developers and projects around as required. In this case, development duties fell to teams in Shanghai (for single-player) and Annecy, France (for the multiplayer). Here are a few titles that the team members have worked on previously.

1995 *Rayman*. The first outing for the strange, limbless creation was a traditional side-scrolling platformer, employing plenty of eye-watering colours.

1999 *Rayman 2: The Great Escape*. Clearly relishing its surreal little hero, Ubi gave him a fully 3D sequel with Nintendo-inspired gameplay.

2003 *Splinter Cell*. Ubisoft introduces the world to the rugged Sam Fisher, a new stealth hero debuting in an adventure based in the Tom Clancy universe.

France and even into the depths of the jungle. No stone is left unturned.

Pandora Tomorrow is far more substantial than a mere expansion pack (the developers reckon that the eight single-player missions should take the same amount of time to complete as the original game), yet not quite different enough to be called a true sequel.

THE SECOND COMING

Instead, *Pandora Tomorrow* is pretty much *Splinter Cell: Part 2* (*All The Bits We Wanted To Put In The First One*). Developer Ubisoft has made a tremendous effort to pay attention to the criticisms aimed at the first game – such as the difficulty levels and in particular, the linearity of the gameplay – and wants to ensure they're sorted in *PT*.

"Making the game less linear has been a lot of work for us, because we've had to develop all the different possible pathways that a player might take during the game just getting from A to B," explains *Pandora*'s producer, Arnaud Carrette. "So in *Pandora Tomorrow*, we've tried to give players the opportunity to be able to go wherever they want within the game environment. But we've used a few features like the dynamic lighting system to try and subtly emphasise



Pandora multiplayer: Shadownets can access parts of the map the mercs never could.

"We wanted to make the game less difficult for players, but still make sure it retained a strong element of strategy"

interesting routes that the player might like to explore."

Along with the linearity of the gameplay, another criticism that was levelled at *Splinter Cell* was the difficulty levels and the problems inherent in the basic 'three alarms triggered and you're

out' rule. "We wanted to make the game less difficult for the players, but still make sure it retained a strong element of strategy," explains Arnaud. "So we decided to make the triggers have a direct impact on the AI of Sam's enemies." This means that each time Sam is spotted, his

foes will reach new levels of heightened awareness and become more dangerous, as well as harder to kill. NPCs will visibly become sneakier if you gain their attention – they'll put on extra armour, as well as becoming more aggressive and cunning, to the extent of even

LIGHT AND SHADOWS

SAM GETS OUT IN THE SUNSHINE

Due to popular demand, *Pandora Tomorrow* does contain a lot more outdoor environments than the original, enabling Sam to get out, stretch his legs a bit and test his new green-hued stealth suit. The jungle environment in particular is a lot of fun, as you can lurk and hide bodies among the greenery (and Sadono's crop of er, recreational herbs). You can also use your thermal sensors here to search for hidden booby traps that might be lurking in the foliage.

The sun also adds a superb new twist to the outdoor missions and demonstrates how the developer has continued to use light and darkness as a predominant aid to stealth and detection. When you're outdoors, the sun will realistically move through the sky throughout the mission. This has the effect of both hindering and helping you, as the moving sunlight will cause shadows to lengthen, create and destroy pools of darkness and occasionally (if you're lucky) blind your enemies.



Enemies will see your shadow, so watch your step.



changing their patrol paths.

Basically, this means that the game becomes tougher the more blasé you are about keeping out of sight, which will force you into making the most of Sam's stealthy skills and gadgets. And let's face it, that's where the real fun lies anyway."

Having played many of the new missions, we can tell you right now that you'll need a patient approach to stealth and stalking to succeed, as the NPCs become hugely tough on their highest level of awareness. You'll get peppered with bullets from all corners if you start making a racket – but at least you know you've only got yourself to blame.

Of course, the meat of the *Splinter Cell* gameplay comes from Sam's array of acrobatic moves and bulging pockets of gadgets and weaponry. Although there are a few new weapons still under wraps, all the old favourites are back, and several have been given a handy makeover.

The ever useful bendy optic camera can now be used to look through trap doors and grills (to allow you to see what's above and below you, as well as in the next

room). You can also switch it to thermal vision mode.

Other improvements have been made to the sticky cam, which is now far more versatile and can deploy gas as well as enabling you to see around corners. Plus, the SC-20K rifle now comes equipped with three zoom levels for improved sniping.

Arnaud also points out that even the basic weaponry has been enhanced: "The handgun wasn't that accurate in *Splinter Cell*, but now we've equipped it with a little red laser pointer that will enable the

player to have a much higher degree of accuracy. The downside is that this comes with the disadvantage that your enemies can see the beam, so you have to be fairly quick when you use it."

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Alongside the updated gadgets and weaponry, Sam has also learned a few tricks himself. He can now shoot while hanging upside down (very useful in the multiplayer game), and use a new half-split jump to bridge narrow spaces, making this previously underused move more versatile. Our hero can even chimney himself up to higher levels with a leaping exit from the Van Damme-esque split pose.

However, perhaps Sam's most useful new move (though not necessarily the most spectacular), is called the SWAT turn. This stylish manoeuvre involves him spinning across an open doorway from one wall-hugging pose to the next (think *Mission Impossible*), allowing him to become temporarily invisible to any enemies that might happen be in the room at the time. OK, we agree that it's not entirely clear why a spinning, crouching man is harder to see than a man running in a straight line, but it looks cool so it's probably worth suspending your disbelief a little over this one.

MULTIPLE SNEAKINESS

But the most exciting part of *Pandora Tomorrow* is the new online element, which we'd have to say is bordering on



The sticky cam is always good for making sure you look cool.

"The new online element in *Pandora Tomorrow* is bordering on genius"

genius. We've been wondering for some time now how the stealthy, third-person gameplay of *Splinter Cell* would translate to multiplayer, but the solution is more innovative than anything we imagined.

Unlike most multiplayer modes, the one featured in *Pandora Tomorrow* isn't about how many players you can stuff into a game – in fact, you can only have four players. It may sound sparse, but it

works brilliantly in practice, as the whole thing is about creating an intense hide-and-seek tension.

In classic good guys vs bad guys tradition, the game pits a team of terrorist mercenaries against a team of covert ops known as Shadownet (though when we say 'team', you could easily play as a lone wolf against three mercs).

Shadownet operatives are essentially Sam Fishers in training, with a watered-down set of abilities but many of the same moves and gadgets. But the brilliant twist is this: to show their lesser awareness and lack of stealth training, the mercenaries are played in normal first-person perspective, while the Shadownets play in full third-person stealth mode, with all the acrobatics and speaking that goes with it.

Why Don't You?...

MAKE SAM FEEL LIKE A REAL PERSON WHOSE DECISIONS IMPACT ON THE GAMEPLAY...

It's true that Sam Fisher is looking a bit more grizzled and world-weary than he did previously – like a cross between a muddy George Clooney and Michael Ironside (Sam's voice in the game). But it would be nice to see more of Sam's personality and private life emerging in the game, in a kind of Jack Ryan/Jack Bauer kind of way – not only so that he feels like a believable human in his movements, but so that he also has some character substance backing that up.

We'd also like to see Sam making a few more choices that directly impact on the way each mission plays out. The developer has promised that the linearity of the game has been improved, so there will be more choices on how to move forward in the game. How about more *Deus Ex*-like choices of moving sideways with sub-quests and the like, to give the game more longevity?



Look! Re-enact the cheesy hostage scenario from a thousand B-grade films.



Cycle smart with the CIA night safety visor.

Q&A

GUNTHER GALIPOT



We talk to Gunther Galipot, creative director of *Pandora Tomorrow*, about the new online mode in the game.

PCZ What was the thinking behind the online part of PT?

GG Well, we started with the theory that the strengths of each side should be opposites so they'd balance each other out. In the game, the spies and mercenaries are very different from each other – one side is a tracker and the other is a hider. People thought we were crazy and said it was never going to work.

PCZ Can you explain a bit more about the abilities of each side?

GG The spies are very powerful, but at the same time they're also very vulnerable. Their skills are in anticipation and detection. The mercenaries are the hunters who have to learn how to protect areas and track down the spies. Playing as them, you'll experience a lot of tension because they embody the human fear of what's waiting in the dark.

PCZ The spies aren't quite the same as Sam though, are they?

GG No, because being able to do things that Sam can – like becoming invisible in the dark – would make them much too powerful. They do share similar moves and abilities though, such as the night and thermal vision, but a lot of Sam's skills wouldn't work as well in online play.

PCZ Explain a bit more about the different multiplayer modes and maps.

GG There are four different game types: Neutralisation and Sabotage, which involve the spies hacking or dismantling specific containers, Extraction (which works a bit like Capture the Flag) and a mode revolving around knocking the mercenaries down and stealing their ID cards. We've currently got five different maps that are definitely going in, along with a whole host that are still in the testing stage.

The use of light in the multiplayer game is superb – for the mercs it's a weapon, for the spies, it's deadly.



Sam Fisher hated café patrons...

By way of balance, the mercenaries are well armed and come equipped with things like alarms and mines so they can protect areas from incoming spies. They also have head-torches to locate any spies lurking in the shadows.

The spies, on the other hand are more unusual to play as they don't have a conventional gun. Instead, they can throw smoke grenades to cover their tracks, or

use a stun-gun that renders their pursuer immobile for a few seconds. If they're feeling particularly malicious, Shadownets can nip behind their enemies and break their necks while they're stunned. Great fun!

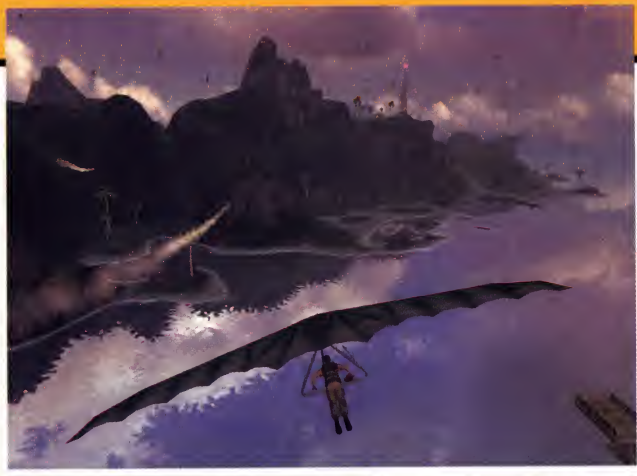
JUST THE TWO OF US

It always warms the heart when a developer appears to have listened to fans and critics and improved on its previous efforts. It proves that this game-designing lark can be a two-way street, and *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* shows exactly why this is so important.

While it may not deviate much from its predecessor, there are a lot of little changes in *PT* that are going to make a huge impact. Alongside great additions like the multiplayer mode, *Pandora Tomorrow* is set to win over any dissenters of the original and keep the game's many fans blissfully happy. Including us. **PCZ**



That's what you get for trying to skimp on train fares.



The T-4 Wet 'n' Dry SuperVac cleans up the nastiest of bloodstains.

Are we not men..?

FAR CRY

Anthony Holden reveals the monstrous truth lurking within *Far Cry*

THE DETAILS

PUBLISHER Ubisoft
DEVELOPER Crytek
ETA March 26
WEBSITE www.farcrythegame.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- We know we keep on about this, but it really does look great
- Cutting edge AI
- Top vehicular action
- Five different types of mutant 'Trigen's'

MAYBE it's the crap English weather, maybe we just like the idea of shooting mercenaries in the head while topping up our virtual tans, but we just can't stay away from *Far Cry* at the moment. Given the AWOL status of *Half-Life 2*, this tropical island shooter is the most promising FPS this side of *Doom 3*. And our picture of the game just became more complete with the unveiling of the Trigen's – *Far Cry*'s mutant antagonists, hitherto shrouded in mystery.

As it turns out, the Trigen's are much as we expected – twisted products of a failed genetic experiment, completing the Dr Moreau-ish scenario of tropical islands, wrecked seamen and duplicitous womenfolk. More surprising perhaps is their appearance: with their hulking



Have no remorse – they're meddling with Things Man Was Not Meant To Know.

demonic forms and big toothy grins, you might say there's something strangely familiar about them... (See boxout.)

But putting this unfortunate... Erm, coincidence to one side, we tracked down *Far Cry* producer Christopher Natsume and got the full lowdown on the big-headed man-beasts.

DESTROY ALL MONSTERS

"At a point in the game, you, as Jack Carver, will discover the mutants," says Chris. "It seems that someone has been doing genetic experiments, and as the experiments became more radical, the failures became more stunning. As a result, *Far Cry* will feature five different types of Trigen. Some are what I'd call aberrations – early failed experiments designed from primates, with limited skill and intelligence. Others are massive human-based creatures designed to take almost unlimited damage and with the stamina to carry the heaviest weapons."

As you can see from the shots, the Trigen's vary in size and weaponry

considerably, some sporting cybernetically grafted rocket launchers, others attacking with their claws alone. And unlike the game's annoyingly smart, team-oriented human enemies, they're a largely unpredictable bunch – not quite mindless brutes, but unnervingly erratic nonetheless.

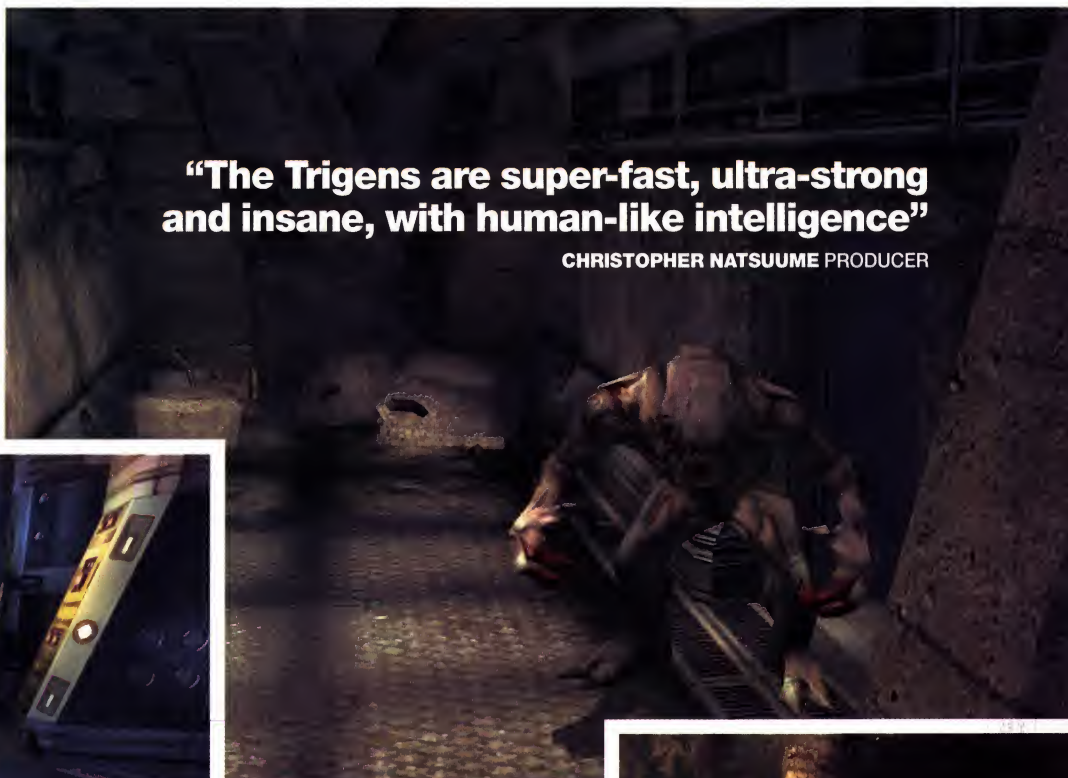
"The Trigen's are far less concerned with defence, formations, or working together than the mercenaries," agrees Chris. "They're super-fast, ultra-strong, and somewhat insane, because of their deformed and mutated brains. They have great power and human-like intelligence, but it's as warped and twisted as they are. They have little self-control or long-term planning ability, and have had no meaningful sociological education – so they're somewhat rough and animalistic in their behaviour."

This kind of monstrous enemy should provide a nice change of pace from the tactical machinations of the game's mercenary forces. Some of the creatures sport a kind of active camouflage, giving



"The Trigenes are super-fast, ultra-strong and insane, with human-like intelligence"

CHRISTOPHER NATSUUME PRODUCER



The look of the Trigenes was inspired by real-life genetic defects found in medical journals. Or so we're told....



There's something out there, but it ain't no man.

them a watery appearance and rendering them partially invisible. In combination with the tropical jungle environment, this can mean only one thing: a re-enactment of *Predator*, replete with mud-smearing and panicked bullet-spraying into the greenery.

This shift in pace also answers a nagging concern we've had about *Far Cry* for some time – that the magnificent scenery and tactical firefights would eventually reveal a certain sameness. Thankfully, variety now seems pretty much

assured. Apart from frolicking around beaches and tootling up rivers in your Zodiac, you'll be spending a good deal of time stalking monsters and cleaning out the laboratories and installations of the evil Krieger Corporation. With, of course, plenty of scientists and workers to splatter all over the wall along the way.

If you have a problem popping a cap in the ass of the janitor and his wife, Chris also has a handy get-out clause. "We wanted to make the Trigenes horrible, not

just scary," he explains. "We wanted something that showed the potential evil and cruelty of medical science used with no regard for the dignity of human life. For us, this was a 'pure evil' that could justify the player killing not only the mutants, but the scientists and workers who willingly contributed to their creation." Which should put your conscience at rest, if not your itchy trigger finger.

SMARTS WENT CRAZY

But while the announcement of the Trigenes adds an additional level of interest to the game, Chris is also keen to remind us that it's the über-smart AI of the human foes that really lifts *Far Cry* above its peers. "I have to say, my favourite moments in the game always come from the AI doing something unexpected," he grins. "We were testing a level a few weeks back, and the player fell off a high wall, with an AI running behind him. The player survived the fall, but then a few seconds later, an elevator near him opened and the AI walked out and shot and killed him. Nobody on the development team had ever planned on the AI being down there, or the player jumping off the wall – but it all worked naturally. It sounds minor, but when the AI figures out to walk around, find an elevator, use the elevator, come down and attack without a designer ever planning on it, it's pretty extraordinary."

Last time we played the game, the enemies were just as likely to freeze on the spot as do something this human-like, so it comes as almost a relief that the release date for the game has been pushed back a month. Trust us, another four weeks is a small price for this game to realise its potential. [E]



Bonfire night takes an ugly turn.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH

FAR CRY PAYS HOMAGE TO A GAME THAT'S NOT EVEN OUT YET...

There we were, sitting around at ZONE HQ, waiting for our next adventure to start, when there was a buzz on the email hotline. Racing over, we punched in the access code and watched as a series of images materialised on the view-screen. "Looks like Activision has sent us some new *Doom 3* shots," exclaimed Martin, scratching his huge head in confusion. "But the transmission coordinates suggest it's from Ubisoft..." The mystery raged on for at least another two and a half minutes, when the truth was finally revealed: these were not the denizens of hell as envisaged by id Software, but the Trigenes – strange mutant creatures from strictly non-hell based shooter *Far Cry*. Ha ha, silly us.

**Far Cry:
Trigenes.**

**Doom 3: NOT
Trigenes.**



Giving it some teeth...

DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN TEAM SABRE

Steve Hill smokes out spider-holes in the new *Black Hawk Down* expansion



Christ, not another *Black Hawk* down.

"**LADIES** and gentlemen – we got him." The proclaimed war on terror has taken some dramatic turns in recent weeks, but as we're constantly reminded, it's never over. This also holds true for the world of games, as this timely reminder looks set to prove. The original *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down* concentrated on the USA's 1993 incursion in Somalia, and it was an unexceptional yet playable addition to the FPS stable. Our major complaint was the very linear, arcade tone of the game, which had about as much tactical depth as *Pong* and all the novelty of a *Tetris* clone. As such, when the *Team Sabre* expansion pack was announced back in June, we have to admit our excitement was wholly controllable – it was akin to us learning that Graham Norton is to have a new show.

However, our interest was recently piqued by the news that development responsibilities have now fallen to Dallas-based veteran Ritual Entertainment, who's been knocking out high-quality shooters for years, including the likes of *SiN* and *Star Trek: Elite Force II*. Ritual itself was also quite excited at the news, with hirsute level designer Richard 'Levelord'



All together now kids: "He's behind you!"

"Development duties on *Team Sabre* have fallen to Dallas-based veteran Ritual, of *SiN* and *Elite Force II* fame"

Gray reportedly "delighted" at the prospect. Let's hope Ritual can redeem itself for its workmanlike efforts on *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*.

COLOMBIA NECKTIE

Reflecting the online focus of the *Delta Force* series, *Team Sabre* offers a whopping 30 new multiplayer maps and a modest ten solo outings, the latter split

into two self-contained campaigns. Taking your boys to the hypothetical near-future flashpoints of Colombia and Iran, the single-player missions are set to offer more pseudo-tactical action, concentrating even more on vehicular combat. We've been dabbling with some of these and have come away mildly impressed. The Colombian episode predictably involves hunting down drug-



The war on terror is never won...

THE DETAILS

PUBLISHER NovaLogic
DEVELOPER NovaLogic/Ritual Entertainment
ETA February 2004
WEBSITE www.novalogic.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Now in development at *SiN* creator Ritual
- Two brand new campaigns
- 30 new multiplayer maps
- More weapons and vehicles

runners, and while the extreme body count does seem a little harsh for the sake of a bit of sniff, it's an intense affair with many different approaches.

For instance, in the first mission you can commandeer a riverboat by killing the drug-runners and threatening the captain. However, attack it too vehemently and it'll sink, leaving you with a long walk through some dense foliage, where you'll need particularly keen eyesight to spot the enemy. As for the Persian Gulf, it's suitably sandy, with the wide-open spaces offering little in the way of cover.

As in the original game, you're generally accompanied by three squad-mates (until they get killed) and can bark rudimentary orders at them. Some of the more glaring AI issues seem to have been ironed out, with enemies showing a bit more in the way of self-preservation.

There's still plenty of work to be done here, but Ritual has been around long enough to know what it's doing. *Team Sabre* may be aimed primarily at multiplayer fans, but if Ritual pulls its finger out, it could well prove to be a reason to buy the original game. **EW**

Disembowelling for Columbine...

KNIGHTS OF THE TEMPLE: INFERNAL CRUSADE

Steve O'Hagan sharpens his wit for some medieval dismemberment

IN THESE days of complex strategies, in-depth RPGs and intricate simulations, it's important we find the time for some less cerebrally demanding gaming. And no genre can offer the simplistic yet satisfying kick the good old hack 'n' slash does – especially when the action is served up with buckets of blood and viscera. Which is a shame for us PC gamers, as we haven't enjoyed a truly outstanding dose of crunching sword-on-bone action since 2001's *Severance: Blade Of Darkness*.

Knights Of The Temple: Infernal Crusade is hoping to fill that void, and from what we've played, it has a decent stab at success. Hailing from Swedish developer Starbreeze (recently responsible for so-so fantasy sword-swingers *Enclave*), the game follows lead character Paul de Raque on his personal crusade against evil. But in a slight diversion from history, instead of slaying unwitting Saracens or pillaging Constantinople, Paul is bent on preventing an evil bishop opening the gates of hell.

As with any hack 'n' slash game, *KOTT* will live and die on the quality of its combat system. And while the interface still needs some work, it works its guts out



The nightmare underworld our Knight has to enter is suitably creepy.

to create a melee style of true savagery and intensity. As such, you'll probably be quite happy just eviscerating a stream of blade-wielding foes, ignoring such complexities as RPG levelling-up and tricky platforming. Which is lucky, as *KOTT* doesn't have any.

So, while there are only two attack buttons, there are a host of combos for each class of weapon (such as sword, mace and axe), and defeating your foes isn't as simple as incessantly hammering your gamepad buttons. Instead, your

enemies have their own self-preservation in mind, and they block, dodge and wait for the moment to unleash a riposte when your guard slips.

FOR MY NEXT TRICK

As well as cold steel, *KOTT* will feature a magic system of sorts in the form of divine powers, so Paul won't be at too much of a disadvantage when confronted by the undying minions of Beelzebub. These will include defensive abilities such as rejuvenation and invincibility, and a

smattering of fire and brimstone on the offensive side.

There's also a range of special attacks to flesh out the learning curve, and a first-person arrow-firing system that presents a challenge all of its own.

SLIT FOR SIX

Things are helped considerably by the superb animations, painstakingly motion-captured by a team of medieval combat specialists. From thrusting attacks to desperate parries, canny side-steps to collapsing death throes, you really do get the impression of desperate men straining under the weight of layers of chain and plate.

The developers have also had success in re-creating the savagery of feudal melee. While you'll probably only ever use one of the six progressively explicit gore ratings, you'll chuckle with glee every time Paul uses his iron-shod boot as leverage to remove the sword he has just plunged deep into his fallen foe.

Playing this game looks like it's going to be a dirty job, but someone has to do it. The gutting begins in February. **[X]**

"Not since 2001's *Severance* have we enjoyed a truly outstanding dose of crunching sword-on-bone action"



KOTT is about 70% pure violence. Magnificent.



Leave a bloody trail in your wake.

THE DETAILS

PUBLISHER TDK Mediactive

DEVELOPER Starbreeze

ETA February 2004

WEBSITE

www.knightsofthetemple.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

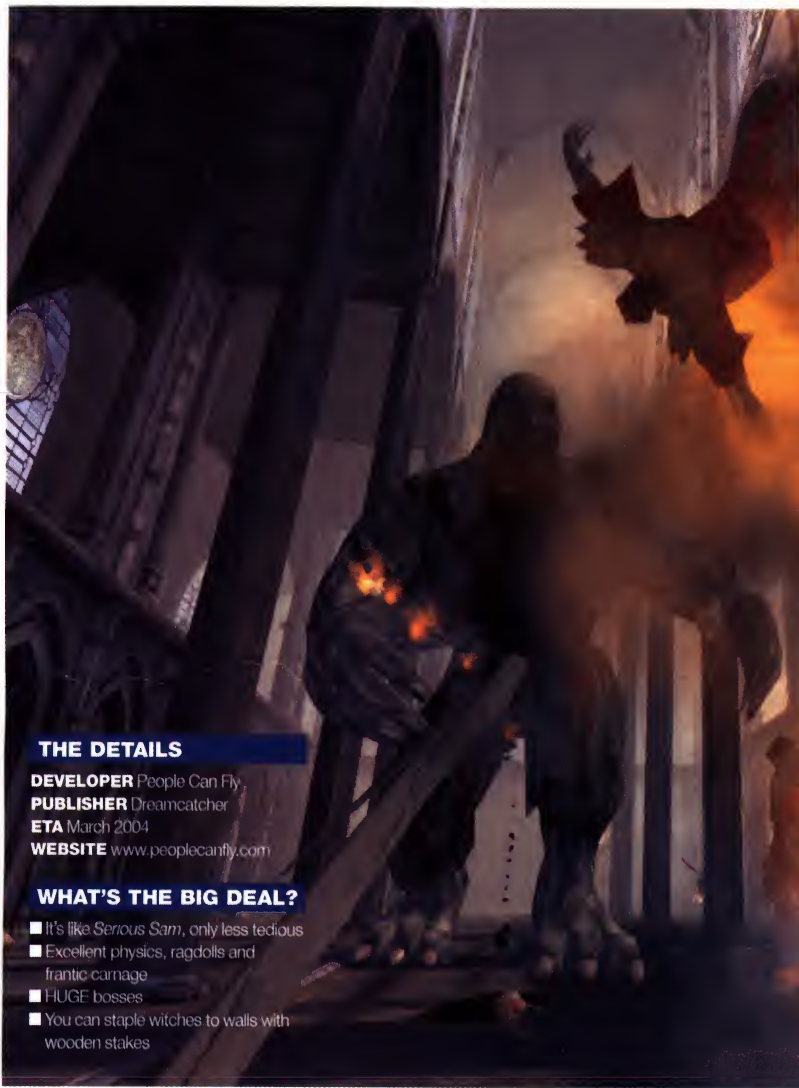
- The best slice of hack 'n' slash action since *Severance*?
- Superb motion-capture
- Buckets of gore
- From the developer of *Enclave*



Paracetamol in purgatory

PAINKILLER

Tense, nervous headache? Throbbing aches and pains? Will Porter shoots people in the head and feels better



THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER People Can Fly
PUBLISHER Dreamcatcher
ETA March 2004
WEBSITE www.peoplecanfly.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's like *Serious Sam*, only less tedious
- Excellent physics, ragdolls and frantic carnage
- HUGE bosses
- You can staple witches to walls with wooden stakes

Gay bishops, female priests, giant ecclesiastical monsters... Religion is under a lot of pressure these days.

OUTSIDE, the wind whistles through the jaded streets of a city still beleaguered by the shadow of the Soviets. The grimy features of Warsaw's faceless tower blocks start fading into the

cold winter night. Meanwhile, in his posh hotel, young Will Porter has just fired a stake into a zombie's face and watched the poor bugger get pinned by the cheek to a ceiling 15ft above his head. For good measure, he takes careful aim and fires two more stakes into its dangly bits and wanders off giggling like a schoolgirl.

Right now, *Painkiller* is barely a blip on the hype radar. Dwarfed by a variety of big guns and developed by an obscure Polish outfit, people might say that the chances of its success are minimal. At least, stupid people would say that.

From what we've seen, heard and played, *Painkiller* is going to be supreme fun. With its gore, Havok-ated ragdolls, sublime monsters and a physics engine that regularly blasts rabid nuns into orbit (as well as stapling them to the scenery), the smart money is on *Painkiller* for being

the first one at the dairy after the fat cats have had their cream.

PARADISE LOST

"The basic story is that you and your wife die in a car accident," explains Adrian Chmielarz, project manager and head honcho at People Can Fly. "She goes straight to heaven, but you haven't been a good guy, so you're stuck in purgatory."

"After 20 years down there, you're approached by the Archangel Samuel with a proposal: Lucifer is starting armageddon by sending his forces to heaven through purgatory – so if you clean out these nests of demons, you'll be granted entrance to heaven."

This may sound like the Gospel according to St Stupid, but with a couple of twists and a sprinkling of heresy, it's certainly an engaging concept. You might

say it's a cross between *What Dreams May Come* and *Serious Sam*, that somehow isn't a pile of putrefying shit.

This may not be entirely the inferno you're expecting either: fire and brimstone are on the menu, but here the emphasis is on hellish variety. You'll be battling through gothic cathedrals and graveyards, but alongside these lie levels based in prisons, docklands, military bases and opera houses. All textures and monsters are level-specific too, so a sense of progression and development (so lacking in games like *Contract J.A.C.K.*) should be maintained throughout the game.

PARADISE REGAINED

The range of monsties available for your perforating delight looks set to be vast too: psychonuns, evil monks, Arabian sword-wielders and bizarre leaping

CV



PEOPLE CAN FLY

Founded in February 2002 and jammed straight in the middle of Warsaw, Poland, People Can Fly named itself after a techno-house track – the crazy ravers they are. The team is mostly made up of game development veterans, some of whom were responsible for *Odium* (an *X-COM* style RPG). The team is now hopelessly devoted to making games that concentrate on fun, action and mentalness. *Painkiller* fits that bill and is the team's first offering.



"For stunning bad guys, check out the bosses – they're the ones 50-100 times your size"

Looks like someone's spilt the communion wine again...



Now would be a bad time to turn the other cheek...



Bodies fly and enemies charge while you giggle maniacally.



An eye for an eye taken too literally.

zombies (who lick the floor while they writhe around without any hands or feet) are among the minions you'll battle. For the grunt-level creatures, the main tactic is to stalk you in huge crowds, try to flank you and generally get blown to the four-quarters by your grenade launcher.

In among these brain-dead stumblers, however, are the masters: the smart cookies who know better than simply to run after you or throw lumps of their own flesh in your direction.

A Skull, for example, will grab nearby minions, wring their necks and use them as a temporary shield.

Adrian, meanwhile, can't help but grin when he starts describing the samurai master. "He's got some cool moves, and some of the best animations in the game. When he's low on health he understands he can't win, so he commits seppuku (Japanese ritual disembowelment), and gives the rest of his life force to the surrounding ninjas." How thoughtful.

PARADISE FRAGGED

For the really stunning bad guys, though, you just have to look at the bosses – you can't miss them, they're the ones 50-100 times your size with a weapon the size of a bus. In a welcome return to *Zelda*-style bosses and the gigantic platform foes of old, *Painkiller* specialises in spectacular conclusions to each of its chapters. Take

Thor, the giant hammer-wielding demon you confront among some forgotten ruins. Every time he hits the ground with his weapon, the earth buckles and you're hurled high into the air and the fragile columns and masonry of the surrounding temples are dislodged and fall around you in perfect physics-led harmony. The game presumably leads up to a scrap with Lucifer himself, so expect the finale to be even bigger and badder.

The atmosphere of *Painkiller* is very much that of the early *Doom* games, and while it won't be competing with *Doom 3*, its gameplay and atmosphere (and colossal bosses) are close to the fundamentals of the id legacy. Whether the game fits as a cohesive whole, as opposed to a collection of fun levels, is yet to be seen; but for fast-paced FPS action that'll make you cackle, *Painkiller* is a very promising prospect. **PCZ**

HEAVEN IS A STOVE-PIPE

KILLING THE UNDEAD MADE EASY WITH FIVE NATTY BOOMSTICKS

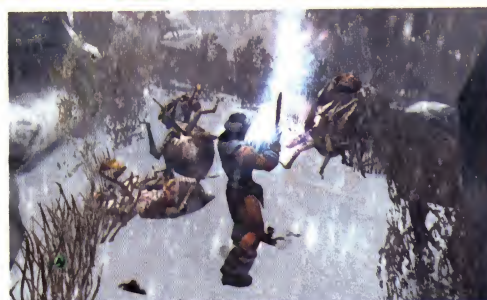
You'll only have five weapons to play with in the game (the designers going for quality over quantity), but each has a miraculous three firing modes, the extra one provided by a swift simultaneous tap of the mouse buttons. So, the Stake-gun doubles as a grenade launcher and super-stake-grenade launcher; and the titular *Painkiller* weapon is not only a spinny-blade-shredding contraption, but also a handily chucked receiver for a laser-tripwire affair that cuts passing zombies in two. Heaven's hitman has no truck with boring old sniping and sneaking – it's gory carnage or nowt.



Monk + grenade + Havok physics = fun.



"Accursed camera, I will crush you like I crushed that stinking camel!"



"By the power of Greyskull..."



That's gonna split him open like a ripe melon.



Even a barbarian has to retreat once in a while.

Blood, revenge, man-breasts...

THE DETAILS

PUBLISHER TDK Mediactive
DEVELOPER Cauldron
ETA February 2004
WEBSITE www.conangame.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- From the developers of enjoyable FPS *Chaser*
- Brutal action with a variety of vicious weapons
- Over 50 attack combos
- Some two hours of cut-scenes

CONAN

Anthony Holden straps on a furry loincloth and comes over all barbaric...

CONAN MAY not be the greatest comic-book hero around, with superpowers restricted to being a big dumb thug with an axe and a costume made out of matted bearskin, but you can't fault the guy for longevity.

Whether in short stories, books, comics, films or games, Conan the Barbarian has been around in some form ever since fantasy hack Robert E. Howard invented the character in the '30s. There's even a new *Conan* film scheduled for 2005, with John Millius, 'The Herman Goering of film directors' once again in the driving seat. It's sure to demand plenty of attention when the time comes,

offering enormous depth of content, but the drawback that nobody really gives a shit. Nevertheless, the game comes with its own set of credentials, being the latest offering from Slovakia-based Cauldron, notably responsible for 2003's above-average *Chaser*.

COLD STEEL

We've been playing around with some 70 per cent-complete code, and while *Conan* isn't going to win awards for beauty, it's a satisfyingly brutal example of the third-person hack 'n' slash genre. The emphasis is on combat, but there are also some basic puzzles to solve, items to find

impressive spinning, kicking sequences. The PC interface is still in a state of flux, but the aim is to get most key combos mapped on to the mouse buttons and maybe one other key. It's the sort of system you'll have to work hard to appreciate, though panicked button-mashing still offers a certain primal gratification.

TOO YOUNG TO DIE

Death too is handled in an interesting fashion. Instead of the usual 'game over - return to checkpoint' solution, you're sucked into the Misty Realms Of Crom, where you're granted a second chance to defeat your conquerors in a gladiatorial ring. Succeed and you return to the exact point where you fell; fail and it's a doubly humiliating exit.

Little touches like this threaten to lift *Conan* above the usual hack 'n' slash drudge, and the appeal of the character should also give the game a bit of charm. What with this and *KOTT* on page 39, we're almost ready to pronounce a hack 'n' slash revival. Let's not be too hasty though, as we should have definitive reviews and demos of both games in next month's *PC ZONE*. **PCZ**

"Panicked button-mashing still offers a certain primal gratification"

so it's quite a timely move by TDK to reprise Arnie's breakthrough role in this bloodthirsty sword 'n' sorcery romp.

Before you get your hopes up though, this game has nothing to do with The Austrian Oak, and its only real tie with the films is that it shares the rousing barbarian theme tune. Instead, it's licensed from the *Conan* fiction, which has the advantage of

and even a bit of NPC interaction in the towns and cities. You'll gather new bits of armour and up to 16 weapons along the way, including swords, axes, maces and other quaint killing devices.

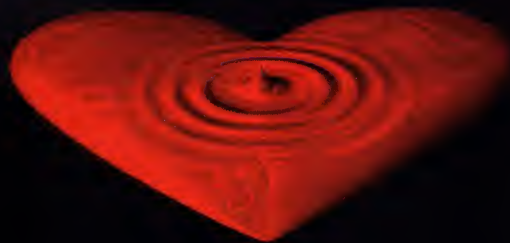
The combat itself is all about combos. There are 50 of the buggers, progressively unlocked as you gain experience and varying from simple sword swipes to



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THE BEST • ~OF~ BRITISH

In part five of our ongoing Best of British series, *Rhianna Pratchett* heads to Oxford, city of dreaming spires and Pro Plus-popping students, as well as a wealth of PC games development talent...

OXFORD



FIVE THINGS YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT... OXFORD

- Banbury Cross (from the old nursery rhyme) is in fact a small tower with a tiny cross on top, in the middle of a busy roundabout.
- Lewis Carroll was really an Oxford mathematics professor called Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. There's a shop in the city devoted to *Alice In Wonderland* merchandise.
- Another literary figure, C.S. Lewis, also taught at Oxford and famously had a romance with the American poet Joy Gresham, which was the basis for the film *Shadowlands*.
- Rhianna went to drama school in Oxford when she was 14, along with one of Rebellion's developers. Her greatest role was as Mrs Dung Beetle.
- Her worst was when she had to get a bucket of ice cold water thrown over her and arrived late for her own funeral.

WHILE THE long hours, stress-filled crunch-times and being on first-name terms with the local pizza delivery company might not sound like the components of the most fun job in the world, games developers do have at least one positive thing in common – they have the best damn selection of toys outside of Hamleys.

The staff at Rebellion have 2000AD models and spiky Todd McFarlane goth chicks adorning the tops of their PCs. The Razorworks team have a very impressive collection of toy cars. The toys at Awesome Development, on the other hand, get their own room. Actually, it's an arcade – full of cabinet games like *Tempest* up to a working *Star Wars* cockpit. Now surely that's worth a few late nights and an all-pizza diet? But my travels to Oxford weren't confined to

finding out what toys these teams possess, as you're about to find out.

DAY ONE – REBELLION

Oxford is a beautiful city, just one hour from the drudge of London Paddington – no surprise then that it's become a small haven for games developers.

The rain is pounding as I arrive at the doorstep of Rebellion and promptly throw myself against the three inches of dry doorway, frantically ringing the bell until some kind soul takes pity and lets me in.

As I dry off, Jason Kingsley, one half of the two-brother team that founded Rebellion (known as the Ks), explains how he and brother Chris were heavily into all sorts of games from *Risk* to train sets. Their leanings towards redesigning them, however, came when Jason invented new rules for Monopoly. In his version, 'Nuclear

Monopoly', you could buy nukes before rolling dice to see where they'd explode.

Chris Kingsley built his first computer from a kit when he was 11, and then learned how to program it. Meanwhile, Jason was much more interested in the rules of games and when he was 18, wrote a Ladybird *He-Man* choose-your-own-adventure book.

"I kept telling Chris that with a book, you can cheat and turn back the pages," explains Jason. "But a computer wouldn't enable you to do this, and I thought it would be great to be able to computerise these adventures."

NEW BEGINNINGS

These thoughts were put aside until the brothers were in their last year of university and decided to put a few game demos together. Their first break came





Judge Dredd: the first 2000AD Rebellion game.



Sniper Elite takes place during the transition between WWII and the Cold War.

from the '70s brown Hessian flock-wallpaper offices of Atari, who thought their game would be perfect for its new console, the Atari Jaguar. From that, Rebellion was born, along with the original *Alien Vs Predator*, the first fully 16-bit textured FPS on a console, no less.

Even though the Jaguar didn't last too long, the guys had impressed people enough with *AvP* for Fox to ask them to do a version, namely *Aliens Vs Predator* (note the 's'). The game represented one of the ultimate FPS survival horror games, not to mention a great adaptation of two film licences. The studio went on to make several expansion packs.

Instead of working on the sequel though, Rebellion had other fish to fry when it purchased the 2000AD comic franchise in 2000. Despite *Johnny Alpha* being Jason's favourite, the character to get the first gaming treatment was the

chisel-jawed Judge Dredd in the recent FPS *Judge Dredd: Dredd Vs Death*.

Rebellion promises there'll be plenty more 2000AD games to come, not least *Wardog*, which was put on the backburner so the team could work on bringing *Dredd*-style law to the masses. The company is also working on *Sniper Elite*, a sniper-sim based during the demise of WWII and the fight between the Germans and Russians for control of Berlin.

As well as its comics and games, Rebellion even has its own small-scale film company, Fearnort, which has just made its first low-budget horror movie, *Parasite*, about giant maggots on an oil rig. (Talk of this rapidly deteriorates into whether *The Guns Of Navarone* would have been better had it contained giant, Nazi attack-maggots.) In a somewhat rocky industry, Rebellion is probably wise to keep so many irons in various fires.



"High five, we wiped out humanity!"



The Judge Dredd team escapes from the office.

DAY TWO - SICK PUPPIES

Day two started off a bit, well, musty. The reason? Sick Puppies' studio, although handily based near Oxford train station, is also quite near the river – which paid an unwelcome visit in the severe floods of last year. It's back to full operation when I visit, but there's still a smell of damp,

which studio founder Gregg Barnett describes as "the smell of Oxford".

Gregg is something of an industry veteran – he started developing games in Australia during the '80s, where he joined one of the few Australian developers of the time, Melbourne House. Gregg worked on such legendary games as

REBELLION

PC games currently in production: *Sniper Elite Wardog*

We chat to... Creative director and CEO, Jason Kingsley



PCZ So would you be interested in taking up the *Aliens Vs Predator* licence again?

JASON Yes – enough time has passed for ideas to have settled in our heads about what we'd do next. We've also got more advanced technology now, so we could do a better job on next-generation platforms too.

PCZ Why did you choose *Dredd* for your first 2000AD game?

JASON He's our most globally well-

known character. The aim was to make a game easy enough for ordinary players that contained innovations in the gameplay, through things like arresting people. We wanted to get some of the wackiness of *Mega-City One* over to people who hadn't read the comics.

PCZ What's the best thing about doing this job?

JASON Seeing something on the shelves and seeing someone buy it. You want to tap them on the shoulder and say: "Look, look we did this!"

PCZ How do you view the UK games industry at the moment?

JASON It's very strong and innovative – we punch above our weight in global terms. It would be good to have a bit more financial support from the government, though – not in terms of subsidies as such, but schemes that can help us to retain value in this country.



SICK PUPPIES

PC games currently in production: *Final Ghost Master* mission



We chat to... Studio manager and creative director, Gregg Barnett

PCZ What's happened to all the adventure games?

GREGG Puzzle-based adventure games can be very costly because they're very content intensive. I don't think there've been that many successful console ports recently.

PCZ Would you like to do another adventure game?

GREGG There's a lot of scope to evolve the genre. In some ways, it's closer to real life than other genres, which has been part of its problem and success. In

comedy adventures, you can create puzzles based around silly things – but when you get more realistic, people do tend to run into the old 'use key on door' boring stuff.

PCZ How do you think the games industry has changed over the years?

GREGG It's a much more serious industry now. It's certainly a lot tighter in what it develops, which is why there are so many titles out there which are guaranteed to make money, like licences and sequels.

PCZ How do you think the UK games industry differs from the games industry in other countries?

GREGG In Japan, game creators are generally better known by the public, but here it's the publishers who're recognised names and a few well publicised developers. The big names have usually been around for a while, rather than any new ones.



The *Ghost Master* team opts for the sepia look.



Scaring girls in towels is shamelessly good fun.

DAY THREE – RAZORWORKS

Day three of my quest saw me taking a meandering bus ride from the centre of Oxford to visit Razorworks. The studio, rather unusually, overlooks a small shopping mall, where the developer is tormented by the smell of fish and chips and serenaded all day long by a little old man with an accordion.

Like Sick Puppies, Razorworks is one of Empire Interactive's internal developers. The team, which was originally founded by Kevin Bezant, Todd Gibbs, David Proctor and Matt Smith, has swelled from eight to 24 people in six years. The company originally started out making flight-sim games, and in



Rhianna loves the *Discworld* games. Who can guess why?

Hungry Horace, Horace Goes Skiing and Way Of The Exploding Fist.

Ten years later, Gregg came to the UK, co-founded Perfect Entertainment and created its flagship titles: *Discworld*, *Discworld II: Mortality Bytes* and a game that has spent a long time in PC ZONE's top ten adventure games, *Discworld Noir*, all based on the novels of Terry Pratchett.

After Perfect closed, we nearly lost Gregg for good – he was about to head back to Australia when Empire offered him the chance to help start up a new studio in Oxford. "I knew that whatever I did in the future, I'd need a flagship title, so I had to think of something. One of the processes I use to come up with ideas is to invert things, and at the time there were a lot of reality TV shows around which I thought were very boring, but half the world seemed to think were great."

GHOST WRITER

And it was this idea, combined with a desire to do something with the supernatural that led to Sick Puppies' first game, *Ghost Master*. If you missed it,

it was an innovative title that put you in charge of managing a team of ghosts and completing missions by using your powers to scare, trick and manipulate mortals. It's nice to know that *Big Brother* spawned something more original than exercise videos.

"I think we had high production values across all areas on *Ghost Master*," explains Gregg. "We were very pleased with the reaction from the casual players, but I don't think we gave the hardcore gamers enough of a challenge."

Sick Puppies has no firm plans for future titles yet, and it's currently busy porting *Ghost Master* to other platforms, as well as working on a final downloadable mission that wraps up the game's story (which should be available by the time you read this).

"We're looking to see how we can reinvent *Ghost Master* in the future for a more hard core audience, while still keeping the same themes – and also how we can use the game's technology in other areas," says Gregg. Watch this space for more news.



1999 it released *Enemy Engaged: Apache Havoc* and a year later *Enemy Engaged: RAH-66 Comanche Vs Ka-52 Hokum* (which we awarded a very respectable 85%).

Two years after being taken under Empire's wing, the company moved on from hardcore PC flight-sims to cross-platform racing games that had more mainstream appeal. "The flight-sim market was getting smaller and smaller, so we needed to look at moving into other areas and also developing for the console market," explains project leader Kevin Bezant on the genre shift. "I still don't think it's a very big genre, unless you put Microsoft on the box. I'd been developing flight-sims for 13 years, and personally needed to do something different."

REVING UP

At first glance, a flight-sim might seem to have a few similarities to a racing sim, but Kevin says that a lot more goes into a racing game than meets the eye.

"For us, it was a huge change from the flight genre. With racing games, we found everything came under more scrutiny because everyone thinks they can drive, everyone thinks they can drive fast and everyone thinks they can drive fast and well! Even tiny things like the position of the chase camera were closely looked at

TABLETOP TO DESKTOP

We chat to...
Chris Bateman



Position on
Ghost Master...
Game design
team leader

PCZ What did your role on *Ghost Master* involve?

CHRIS *GM* was designed externally by my company, International Hobo, which provides game design and dialogue scripting. I led the design team as we developed the game mechanics and

level designs to Gregg's satisfaction, and then continued to monitor and adjust the game throughout.

PCZ How did you get into game scripting in the first place?

CHRIS I'd been working in tabletop role-playing games when the market suddenly dried up because of a certain trading card game... I got a job at Perfect Entertainment based on my game design experience – I was writing novels at the time. The directors at Perfect loved my work and I got the scriptwriting job on *Discworld Noir*.

PCZ What advice would you give people

looking to get into games scriptwriting?

CHRIS As with any writing job, read a lot and practice writing a lot. Write short stories, novels, plays – whatever comes naturally. And play lots of games, but bear in mind that the level of narrative sophistication at the moment is quite low, so try and imagine what could be done, rather than what's currently done. Go to the IGDA (International Game Developers Association) www.igda.org and download the White Paper on Game Writing that we've put together – it's an excellent starting point for anyone interested in this field.

– some people wanted it a fraction higher and some wanted it a fraction lower."

The team acknowledged several years ago it needed to make the break into developing for consoles too. "We've always had a change or die philosophy," says Kevin, and Razorworks found it was a steep learning curve to reach the mainstream market. Its first cross-platform title, *Total Immersion Racing*, took two years to develop and was a fairly hardcore racing sim, with detailed features like AI that held grudges and would try to get you back if you cut them up.

However, Razorworks' next game, which it's just completed is *Ford Racing 2* – and that thankfully took only nine months to complete. "When you get a project that you know is going to be two years in the making, you're always going to hit that big project blues because you've created so many assets and you know between now and then you have to tie everything up. But *Ford Racing 2* has been great because we've been able to build on a lot of technology used in *TIR*."

Kevin then gave me a preview tour of *Ford Racing 2*, which boasts a great range of cars including gorgeous classics like a Thunderbird and a '68 Mustang, and should be enough to fill anyone's Christmas holiday boredom (we gave it a respectable 64% last issue). Sadly, all I had to take me home was a tubby little country bus.

DAY FOUR – AWESOME DEVELOPMENTS

The final day of my journey culminated in Awesome Developments, where I met up with Archer Maclean. One word of advice: don't trust this man with your ice cream money. When he went on a school holiday to Bude, he used the money he'd been given to buy his peers ice creams to play *Pong* instead. He spent hours transfixed by the machine, and although Mr Walls didn't turn a profit that day, the spark was ignited that gave the UK games industry one of its most successful developers.

Archer's first contribution to the games industry is something of a Boy's Own fairytale. He attended one of the only three universities in the world (Coventry) that ran a computer-cum-robotics degree,



Ford Racing 2: quality road action in a budget package.



The Enemy Engaged games: classics of their time.



The Razorworks team, stylishly posed.



Total Immersion Racing brought a vindictive, vengeful edge to the track.

RAZORWORKS

PC games in
production:
Ford Racing 2

We talked to...
Project leader,
Kevin Bezant



PCZ How would you like to see Razorworks moving forward?

KEVIN I'd like it to expand so we can take on more than one project at a time, because if you have a title being released every year, it keeps your name out there.

PCZ What kind of games would you like to do in the future?

KEVIN I've been doing this for over 20 years, so I'm not really that precious about what we do, as long as we do it

well. Personally, I'm not tired of the racing games yet and I still like the war games. I'd consider doing something like that again in the future.

PCZ Would you ever consider going back to hardcore flight-sims?

KEVIN No, I don't think we'd do that type of game again. It's taken us two projects to make the transition from hardcore to mainstream and you don't just shed your skin overnight.

PCZ How do you keep motivated?

KEVIN We try to keep one step ahead of the game and work hard to make sure that each of our games does better than the last. We also get involved with the right projects, because you need to believe that the game you're working on is going to go somewhere.



The Awesome team take over a local fairground.



Tell us a story Uncle Jimmy, about the good old days of snooker back in 1991.



and spent most of it programming games for the Atari 800, one of which was the famous *Dropzone*. It went to number one in the charts, and just as Archer thought he wasn't going to have to work again, he found out he wasn't going to get paid. After a four-year legal battle he finally did and went out to buy his first Ferrari.

SNOOKER-LOOPY

After that he went on to create a string of chart-topping titles including *International Karate*, *International Karate +* and *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*. It's for the latter game and three subsequent pool and snooker titles that Archer and Awesome Developments (which he started in 1991) has made its name.

The inspiration for these games, claims Archer, came in 1981 when he had a vivid dream that he was suspended by a piece of string, swinging backwards and forwards over a snooker table. Although the hardware wasn't available to do a 3D snooker game well back then, it wasn't long before Archer could fulfil his dream.

The great Jimmy White came on board thanks to Jeremy Beadle (bizarre but true), who saw *147 Snooker* (as *Whirlwind* was originally called) at a trade fair and loved it, but thought it needed a big name and passed on the details of Jimmy's agent. Although Awesome's next pool project isn't featuring Jimmy, his legacy lives on in Awesome's studio. In fact, there's a room storing Jimmy's huge blue pool table and trophies – and, for reasons even Archer can't understand, one of Steve Davis's too.

As far as the future is concerned, Awesome is working on several projects: a first and third person arcade-style space shooter with graphics Spielberg would be proud of; and another, which Archer claims will be a genre-busting game.

Meanwhile, the next game you'll see on the shelves is *Pool Paradise*. This cross-platform title is somewhat different from Awesome's previous pool games,

and involves being dropped on a desert island and playing pool against a cast of mutants and misfits, for cash, equipment and various other oddities like a Ferrari and a treasure map. There's definitely an element of *Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball* to it, without having to worry that you might find yourself explaining to the lady in your life why you're gawping over a virtual Japanese schoolgirl that you've just given a new bikini to.

There's something about playing a crazy game of pool against a disreputable character and winning a Ferrari that's very well suited to Archer Maclean – and his enthusiasm for *Pool Paradise* suggests that maybe, just maybe, this is the pool game he's wanted to make all along. **PCZ**

AWESOME DEVELOPMENTS

PC games currently in production:
Pool Paradise
Several secret projects



We chat to...
Studio head and founder, Archer Maclean

PCZ What made you want to start your own studio?

ARCHER It was the only way of surviving in the games industry. I'm one of the last dinosaur programmers who managed to do everything myself. I technically retired in '93 and for three or four years it was wine, women, parties, racing cars and driving speed boats. However, for financial reasons I decided to go back into it in 1997.

PCZ What's happened to the solo bedroom coders?

ARCHER It's extremely difficult to get into games these days if you want to be a one-man-band, unless you want to do mobile games. Now there's a huge infrastructure of publishers controlling developers, lots of financial strings being pulled, the marketing machines, the magazines and the charts, and that's usually much more complex than the whole development cycle...

PCZ Why do you think that games industries in this country are suffering at the moment?

ARCHER Development is what feeds this industry, yet developers are completely mucked about, ruined and not encouraged at all to do the good things that they used to. This is because there's this huge layer of management above, who all feel they have to have their say or change things at the last minute – and this has a huge impact. It's destroying developers.



The refined gentleman's preferred setting.



Even the Aztecs had to chill out sometime.

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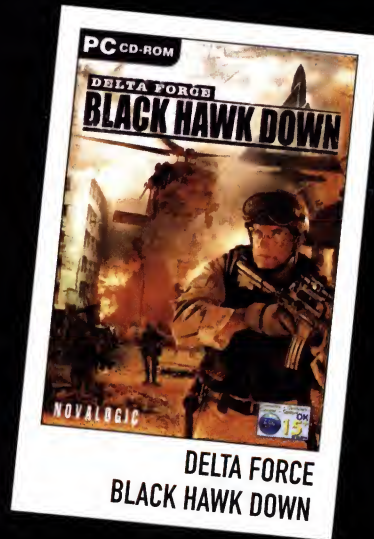
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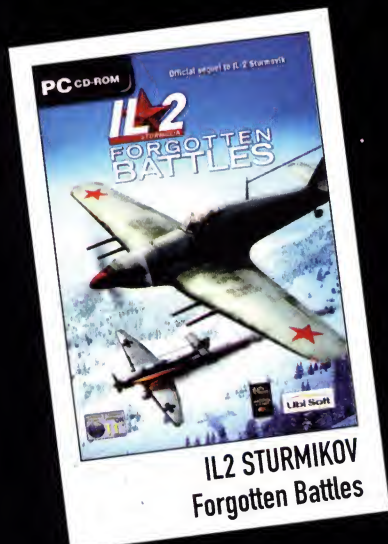
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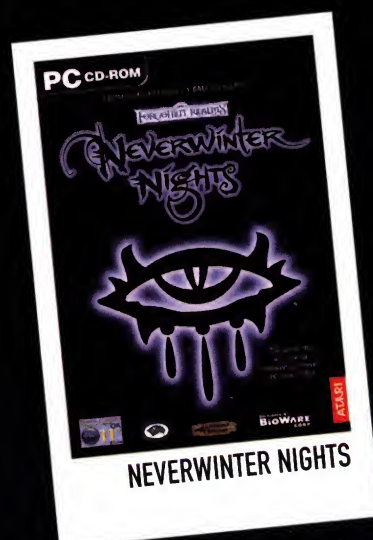
TOM CLANCY'S
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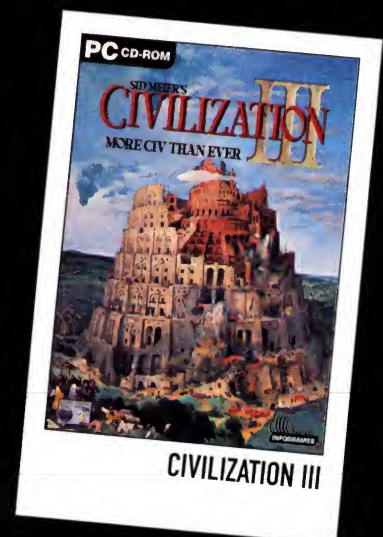
PIRATES OF
THE CARIBBEAN



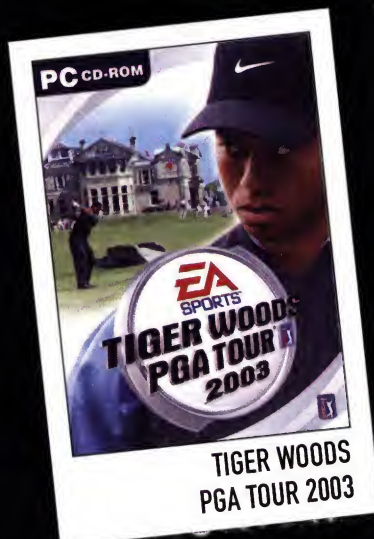
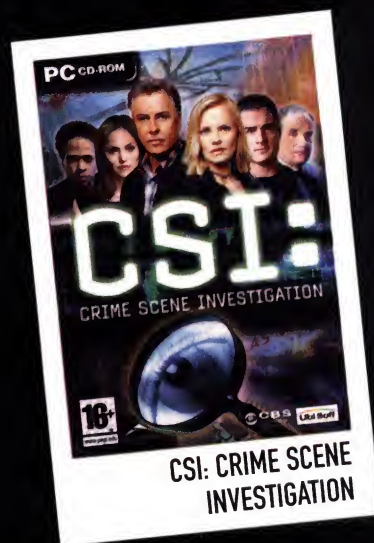
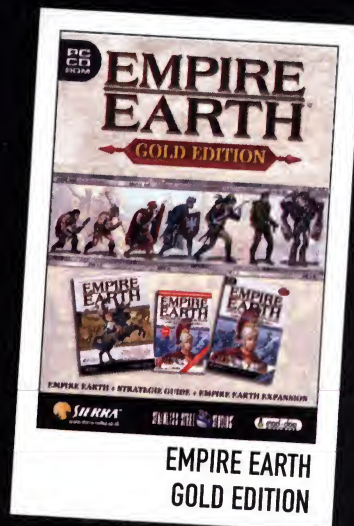
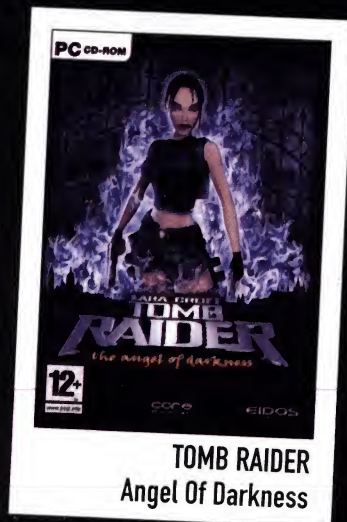
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REVIEWS

THE DEFINITIVE LOWDOWN ON ALL THE LATEST PC GAMES

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE



■ SENIOR REVIEWS ED The Kordinator

▲ OK, so it may say February on the cover, but seeing as this issue went on sale near the start of January (the joys of doing 13 issues a year), I thought I'd wait till now to cast a nostalgic glance back at the year that was 2003.

Let's start with the Classic count, which once again proves that PC ZONE's stringent scoring system only deems the creamiest of PC games worthy of our coveted award. We dished out 12 Classics back in 2002 and 2003 saw a repeat of that number, although had it not been for a last-minute rush of staggeringly good titles, it would have been far fewer.

So dislocate your arms and pat yourselves on the back if you bought any or all of the following 2003 Classics – *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell*, *EverQuest: Planes Of Power*, *Unreal II: The Awakening*, *Championship Manager 4*, *IL-2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles*, *Rise Of Nations*, *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, *Pro Evolution Soccer 3*, *Max Payne 2: The Fall Of Max Payne*, *Call Of Duty*, *Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic* and *Championship Manager Season 03/04*.

Last year was packed with quality PC games, once again proving to the ever-bleating doom mongers that the PC is a gaming platform on the rise rather than in decline. And what's more, cast a quick look over this month's reviews and you'll find 2004 has got off to a cracking start, with the dishing out of two Classic awards.

And what have we got to look forward to in the coming months? Can it get any better? *Half-Life 2* anyone? *Doom 3*? *Rome: Total War*? *Sam & Max: Freelance Police*? *Black & White 2*? Need I go on? Didn't think so.

It'll certainly be interesting to see what gets into the Classic list this time next year. Place your bets now – it's going to be one hell of a ride.



Can *Unreal Tournament* regain its crown as king of the team-based shooters? Find out on page 54.

THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

Some people (mainly games publishers) say that our scoring system is harsh. It's not. It's honest and built around the seemingly outdated idea that 50 per cent is an average score. Likewise, 70 per cent is a good score, anything above 80 per cent is excellent, and 90 per cent and above is a Classic (see below). Talking of Classic awards, don't expect to see one every issue as we don't chuck them around like confetti.

OUR REVIEWERS

We think our reviewers are the best in the business. Each one is a specialist in numerous genres and will have played every major release, so no game is judged in isolation. We also make sure the right game gets

reviewed by the right person, which means you won't see Steve Hill reviewing an RPG and we won't let Rhianna loose on *FIFA Football 2003*. You can have your say on the games and our reviews as well. If you have a comment to make, please email your views to letters@pczone.co.uk and entitle your email 'Feedback'.

ONLINE REVIEWS AND REVIEW UPDATES

We review a lot of games before they go on sale, and if there are no public servers running before we go to print, we won't second-guess how the game's going to play online. Instead, you'll find dedicated online reviews of all the major releases in our regular Update section. This is also the place where we take a fresh look at games we think have changed significantly – as is the case with persistent online games or through major patch releases.

OUR PCS

We test games on a variety of systems so we can report how they perform in the real world. All our reviewed games are played on the manufacturer's minimum specification, as well as our own top-end rig – the Area-51 from Alienware (below).



Only games that score 90 per cent or more receive the coveted Classic award. The best of the best.



The second tier award for games scoring between 80 and 89 per cent. Essential purchases.

MEET THE TEAM



DAVE WOODS

Hidden & Dangerous 2 and
Unreal II: XMP

Alex Ferguson



JAMIE SEFTON

Secret Weapons Over Normandy
and *Pro Evolution Soccer 3*

Wayne Sleep, because he's
smaller than me

What are you currently playing?

Who would you like to face in a
real-life one-on-one deathmatch?



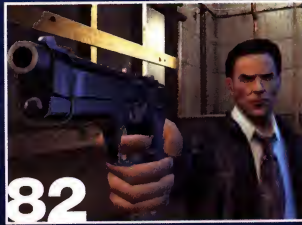
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Return of the king?



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Older games at new prices



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Where you air your opinions



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Scary games vs a haunted house

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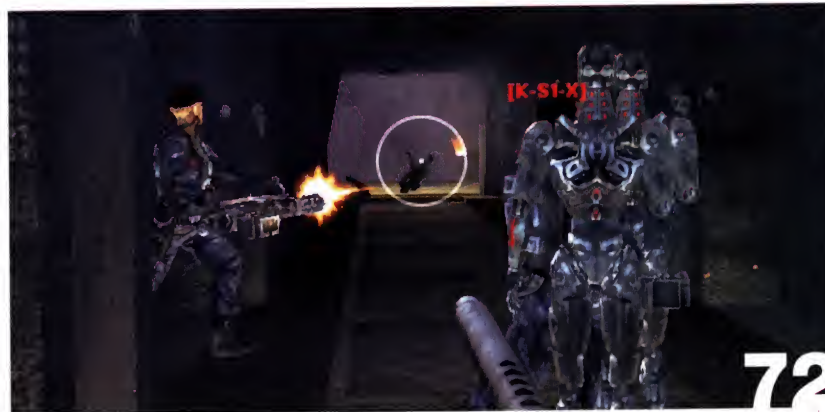
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MARTIN KORDA

UT 2004, Champ Manager
Season 03/04 and Unreal II: XMP

Skeletor



ANTHONY HOLDEN

Halo multiplayer, Max Payne 2
and Unreal II: XMP

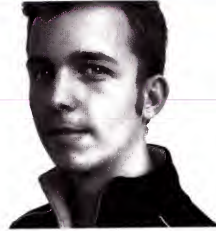
Anyone involved in the making of
Pop Idol



PAUL PRESLEY

X2: The Threat and Star Wars
Galaxies

Sepp Blatter for not making
Thierry Henry player of the year



WILL PORTER

Max Payne 2 for the third time
and Quidditch World Cup

Whoever killed Fallout 3. The
heartless bastard



RICHIE SHOEMAKER

Unreal Tournament 2004 and
EVE Online

Any world despot, so long as
he's frail



KEITH PULLIN

Beyond Good & Evil

Martin Johnson



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

■ £34.99 | Pub: Atari | Dev: Epic/Digital Extremes | ETA: Feb 13 | www.unreal.com

REQUIRES PIII 1GHz, 128MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card **DESIRES** P4 1.5 GHz, 256MB RAM, 128MB 3D card and a broadband Internet connection.

Having seen off *Quake III*, Epic has now set its sights on wrestling the teamplay title from the likes of *Battlefield 1942* and *PlanetSide*. *Richie Shoemaker* gets ready for a rampage

IT'S BEEN over a decade since the release of id Software's seminal *Doom* title, and over that time, multiplayer first-person action has pretty much become a sport itself, just like the *FIFAs* and *NBAs* of this world. It was surely only a matter of time then until an astute developer would eventually go and do an EA Sports in an attempt to corner the market for virtual reality combat, with a

yearly update of the franchise. Step forward Epic.

Its latest *Unreal Tournament* game follows directly from last year's edition – and by this time next year, *UT2005* will surely be beating on our bulkhead. Which leaves you with one key question to answer: if you bought last year's game, a bit like *FIFA 2003*, then should you buy this? The answer is a very definite and predictable: "Hell, yeah!"

something to bring down the young pretenders to the FPS throne. In little over a year, it's not only managed to provide a distinct and enjoyable alternative, but one that in many ways makes these games look at times amateurish by comparison. In the new Onslaught mode especially, *Unreal Tournament* offers a means to engage in vehicular combat that, though smallscale in comparison to the likes of even *Tribes*, certainly doesn't feel as such.



IN PERSPECTIVE

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003 Reviewed Issue 122, Score 90%

Since all the skins, maps, game modes and weapons have been transferred into *UT2004*, you would've thought last year's edition is made completely redundant as a result. And you'd be right.

PLANETSIDe

Reviewed Issue 131, Score 82%
Despite the poor add-on, Sony's subscriber-only online shooter is still worth considering for its huge variety of vehicles, vast tracts of land and intense pitched battles that regularly pull in hundreds of combatants.

BATTLEFIELD 1942: DELUXE EDITION

Reviewed Issue 136, Score 85%
Rough around the edges, a poor offline game and harsh on the humble foot soldier, *BF1942* remains a classic online game that easily straddles the high fence that separates fun gameplay from dry realism.

EPICALYPSE NOW

Whereas *UT2003* was justified by the obvious graphical and much-needed control improvements over its 1999 predecessor, this year's release adds much more meat to the bones. Mildly enhanced graphics, new player models, a far friendlier user interface and some new weapons are to be expected and are heartily welcomed. However, it's the new team-centred gameplay modes – the return of an old favourite particularly – and the introduction of driveable vehicles that make this such an exciting and important addition to the *Unreal* lineage.

With Deathmatch increasingly going out of fashion and CTF superseded in turn by the likes of *Counter-Strike*, *Battlefield 1942* and *PlanetSide*, it was obvious Epic had to do

CORE BLIMEY

Rather than flag or frags, Onslaught's currency of import is power – or, to be precise, the flow of it across the map. Each side, red or blue, begins with a home base, the centrepiece of which is the electrical power core. Lose the core and you lose the match, simple as that.

To keep each side from rushing into the enemy base to secure a swift victory, each side's power core is shielded. The only way to bring it down is to gain control of a chain of power nodes until you have a link running from your power core to that of your enemy. Of course, the enemy is trying to run a similar link to you too, and with nodes

regularly changing hands, life is certainly never dull.

The genius of Onslaught mode, though, lies not in its simplicity, but in the design of the maps. Although in some cases these are vast, they always manage to ensure that you're not left wandering around lost and alone.

Power nodes are never more than a minute's walk away either, and if it's under enemy control, simply destroy it and build your own (just walk on to the pad). However, if it's already under your control and not under

attack, you can use it to teleport yourself closer to the action in the blink of an eye. Alternatively, you can climb aboard one of the vehicles that will be lying about and travel to the frontline in comfort and style.

HONK IF YOU LOVE JESUS

Though there are only six vehicles available to you in Onslaught (plus another three in Assault games), they're all multifunctional, easy to control and most important of all a helluva lotta fun to drive – even if

you happen to be on the wrong side of the steering panel.

Ironically, it's the two flimsiest modes of transport which are the most satisfying in *Unreal Tournament*. First, the Manta, a small hovercraft powered by twin fans which you can use to messy effect to slice up enemy grunts with a timely use of the jump key. It's a tricky skill to master for sure, yet even on the receiving end it's a hilarious way to meet a temporary end as your torso is sucked in and sliced into a fine red mist, leaving legs momentary spurling before crumpling to the ground.

Second, the Scorpion is similarly effective at bringing down infantry with its alt-fire switchblade scythes, which slice enemy troops in two. As satisfying as it is to mow through a squad of troops though, there

are few more satisfying moments than avoiding its rapidly approaching blades by running up a nearby hillock and suddenly leaping up as the oversized knives sweep harmlessly under your feet. This is especially true if the hapless driver neglects to sheath his vehicular vanes before ploughing into a lamppost and tearing them from their fragile mounts.

KISS OF THE SPIDER MINE

To compliment the new mode of play and the various air and land-based vehicles, Epic has wisely seen fit to extend *UT*'s already imposing arsenal. All the weapons from last year's game make a welcome return, as well

as the much-loved sniper rifle from the original game (which almost makes the Lightning Gun redundant, but we're not going to complain).

All-new to the *UT* gun rack is the AVRIL, a slow but deadly homing rocket launcher, along with a laser targeting device able to call in a devastating barrage of Redeemer bombs. There's also a grenade launcher whose magnetic ordinance can be hidden about enemy vehicles and detonated from a distance – good for eliciting a dastardly snigger towards a roomful of LAN-entrenched players.

Most gratifying of all are the Spider mines which, when

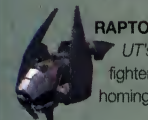
UNWHEEL TOURNAMENT

CLIMB ABOARD AS WE TAKE YOU FOR A SPIN IN UNREAL TOURNAMENT'S NEW TOYS



MANTA

Like a Sinclair C5 powered by twin industrial-sized hairdryers, the Manta is fast, flimsy and fun. Plasma bolts provide the main armament, but woe betide anyone who gets sucked into its props.



RAPTOR

UT's only craft capable of atmospheric flight is a standard fighter plane with forward-firing plasma guns and a bank of homing missiles. It goes up, down... That sort of thing.



GOLIATH

A tank, and as such it's slow but lethal. The big cannon will make short work of anything not bolted down, while the machine gun (which can be controlled by a second person) provides much needed protection from aircraft.



HELLBENDER

Average top speed, decent armour and two gunnery positions make this the game's best assault vehicle. The rear turret can be powered up by keeping the fire button pressed down, while the side cannon fires Shock Rifle bolts that can be chain-dettonated with the alt-fire key.



SCORPION

A typical one-man buggy; fast, bouncy and susceptible to anything stronger than a faint breeze. However, the Scorpion's turret fires a bolas of energy-sapping ribbon that ensnares vehicles and soldiers alike, and can be used to web gates and valleys. The side-choppers are great too.



LEVIATHAN

Four plasma turrets and a rocket launcher that can unleash a never-ending stream of fireworks mean this behemoth is the king of the battlefield. It's as slow as Korda would be after a week eating vegetables, but hit the alt-fire and the Leviathan transmutes into the ultimate weapon.



One corridor, two flags – it's crazy.

"UT2004 offers almost all you could ever want in a first-person shooter – and a bit more"

placed in the path of an enemy will spring into motion and scuttle after them. Further comedy can be obtained with use of the weapon's alt-fire mode, which enables you to shepherd your arachnoid explosives with a laser pointer and chase people to their doom. Optional Benny Hill-style musical accompaniment would be most welcome right here if any mod authors are reading this.

PASS THE ASSAULT

Though Onslaught mode is worth the entrance fee alone, it would be remiss (not to mention plain rude) to overlook the return of UT's much missed Assault mode.

Divided into Attackers and Defenders, Assault charges one team with the business of checking their way through a list of objectives, while the defenders try to thwart or at least delay their advance until the timer runs out. When it does, or if the attackers complete their mission, the two sides swap places and the action begins once again.



Lather up buddy, this is going to be the best shave you've ever had.

In the original UT, it was the D-Day-inspired Overlord mission that was the pick of the bunch of Assault scenarios. This time, picking a winner is a much tougher call. Objectives are certainly more varied, for as well as simple checkpoints that need to be reached, some maps require you to hold an area for a certain time before further advances can be made. Walls and doors also need breaching,

gun emplacements require elimination and in some cases, vehicles need to be driven to safety.

Of the new Assault maps, the one that's received all the attention is the Mothership level, and for good reason. The aim is familiar; human forces must destroy the Skaarj, but in order to defeat the reptilian razor-fingered foe, you must first land in the docking bay, which is

shielded and powered by three massive generators. The only way to eliminate these is to climb aboard fighters and dogfight your way through space while Skaarj plasma turrets cut holes across the inky beyond.

Although control of the

game's spacebound craft isn't quite as fluid as it was in say *Freespace*, the use of the common pool FPS key commands ensures control of the spacefighters – as with all the game's vehicles – is easy to master. Homing missiles and

MISSED OPPORTUNITY (O)



You're rubbish. I want a new team-mate.

A LEAGUE APART?

Despite employing the best bots in the business, *Unreal Tournament*'s single-player game has always been something you dip into rather than get obsessed about. The Tournament mode from 2003 returns and if you've yet to indulge, it's worth completing. It would've been wonderful if Epic could have expanded on it however, adding more management options with proper leagues and trophies, something along the like of *Speedball 2* or *Pro Evolution Soccer 3*. If nothing else, such options would have perhaps given us reason to dip back into deathmatching now and again and in future perhaps have become another classic multiplayer mode.



instant-hit laser cannons ensure combat is kept simple, yet frenetic and entertaining at all times too. Plus, although space battles are little more than zero-gravity jousts, the change in scenery makes for a welcome diversion from all the land-based action around.

Once the shields are down and the docking bay is duly breached, the action proceeds on foot. And although the endgame is somewhat of a letdown, the preceding action more than makes up for it. It will be interesting to see what the developers of the promising *Star Wars Troopers* mod can come up with too, as I'm sure player-controlled speederbikes and snowspeeders are now high on the wishlist of new features to be added.

MODE TO JOY

In order to allow *UT2003* veterans continued Deathmatch enjoyment against 2004 newcomers, little has changed in the way the original gameplay modes play out. (Aside from a graphical makeover for the regular arsenal and a pack of new player models, that is.) The standard issue free-for-all fragmatch returns, along with its team-based variant. As with CTF, Double Domination and Bombing Run, the action remains unchanged.

Capture The Flag stays the same as it's ever been. Grab the enemy's banner and return home before the

enemy steals yours. Best played with the InstaGib modifier, the seven new CTF maps vary in size – from an insane single corridor of joust to the vast expanse of an ancient and misty valley dominated by a Chinese temple. The latter is one of the most arresting *UT* levels we've seen, and one that, were it not for the endless cacophony of conflict, we'd quite like to picnic in someday.

The rest of the variants aren't so arresting. Domination is an infrequently tense game of capture-and-hold and Bombing Run a rather tedious future sports event, where the aim is to shoot a globe into the enemy's hole. Just a handful of new maps for each hint that Epic is content to just keep a low flame burning under them.

Depending on whether you downloaded last year's *Epic Bonus Pack*, Invasion, Mutant and Last Man Standing will be entirely new or achingly old hat. Either way, none are particularly awe-inspiring. Mutant simply highlights the leader for termination by the rest of the pack, while Last Man Standing is deathmatch but with three lives instead of an infinite supply.

Last, Invasion is a co-operative gang-bang against successive waves of AI creatures, which would probably be a lot of fun were it not for a swarm of insects that keep popping up.

Not that the lack of changes to Deathmatch or any of the other standard-issue gameplay modes are in any way disappointing. It's just that after playing Onslaught and Assault, they appear shallow and more than a little old-fashioned. If you



If you've gotta go, go with a bang.



Clearly, these boys have got the horn.

EVERY LITTLE HELPS

YOU DID KEEP THE RECEIPT, DIDN'T YOU?

Us gamers aren't adverse to rummaging through our bins in search of a crust of cold pizza to keep us going through a long, hard night of gaming. However, if you own *UT2003*, Atari has added further reason for you to root through your rubbish bins with news that the North American Rebate program will also apply to us in the UK.

This means that if you've held on to your till receipt until now, don't throw it out just yet. Inside copies of *UT2004* will be a voucher and instructions on how to claim back the princely sum of £7.50. Of course, if you've lost the little paper slip or the ink has faded, you're a bit screwed.



"Yippee! £7.50 off of *UT2004*!"

want to know how *UT2004's* Deathmatch mode plays, a review of *UT2003* will tell you all you need to know.

HOT BOTS

Not so much a welcome improvement as a necessary upgrade is the new AI code for the game's bots. Clearly, with the new Onslaught mode there was a need to teach *UT's* AI-assisted goons how, why and what to do with power nodes, not to mention how best to use each of the game's vehicles.

Considering how well *Battlefield 1942's* artificial lifeforms fared – which wasn't very well – Epic has done a remarkable job teaching its cast members the whys and wherefores of what is a rather more demanding game in comparison to *BF1942's* land-grab. As any adrenaline-fuelled player would do, the AI heads straight to the vehicles and

MIC HUNT

ORDER YOUR BOTS INTO BATTLE THE EASY WAY

Previous editions of *Unreal Tournament* have required you to press a key to open up a Command menu, and then choose from a list of options in order to get your bots to do anything useful. This time however, Epic has introduced a proper Voice Command option. You'll notice that each bot has a callsign – 'Alpha', 'Bravo', 'Charlie', 'Dave' etc – so all you have to do is hit the required key and say something like 'Foxtrot hold position', at which point the designated bot will stop and defend his patch. It helps if you have a microphone, of course.



"Alpha, cover me; Bravo, get my pizza..."

handles them all remarkably well. They were even happy to repair damaged equipment.

There were a couple of instances of bots getting confused among a crowd of freshly-spawned recruits, but no more so than any human player would in the same situation. And anyway, a little artificial stupidity lends the bots a human quality that they were in danger of

losing had there not been a rethink by Epic.

JUMP ABOARD

Whether online or off then, *UT2004* is a triumphant success. It's certainly not the glorified expansion pack some – myself included – feared. The return of the old stalwart gameplay modes is welcome, despite the fact they will remain unexplored

by most people. What's more, the backward compatibility of the game is a feature that will endure it to many veteran deathmatchers still refusing to jump aboard the teamplay bandwagon.

Save for a non-linear, dynamically-structured single-player campaign with endless replayability, *UT2004* offers just about all you could ever want in a first-person shooter – and just a smidge more. Out of all the other vehicular shooters, *UT2004* is by far the most visceral and accessible, and is almost always fun.

PlanetSide is certainly more 'epic' and rewarding in the long-term, but its size and scale is tempered by moments of excruciating boredom. Similarly, *BF1942* may be a more realistic game and certainly a more



SECOND OPINION

MARTIN KORDA

Having played the game thoroughly a couple of months ago, I felt confident that *UT2004* would not disappoint. I was right. Onslaught mode is a stroke of genius, finally offering something a little different to the hackneyed game modes present in every team-based shooter since the dawn of time.

Assault makes a welcome return too, while the introduction of vehicles adds a whole new dimension to the gameplay. Not only are they varied, they're also easy to handle and very satisfying. Plus, the AI is among the best I've seen in a shooter.

To be honest, I wasn't that impressed with *UT2003*, but this year's version has rekindled my love of the game. Buy it, you won't regret it.

varied and tactical one, but it's also marked by ungently play on public servers. What's more, the bots are poor, and on foot, the game is far from being as enjoyable as it is when mounted in a tank or swooping from the skies.

To return to the *FIFA* analogy, the difference between *UT2003* and *2004* is vast, as if the former was just a kickabout in the park. My only worry is how Epic plan on topping it, because aside from bolting on new weapons, maps and vehicles, there isn't much else to be added apart from say a massively-multiplayer persistent-world mode. We'll see. In the meantime, there's more than enough to enjoy this season before we contemplate the next. Game on. [TV]

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Fun, focused and frantic new modes
- ✓ Distinct vehicles that are easy to control and fun to play
- ✓ Incredibly adept AI
- ✓ Staggering variety in new maps and mission objectives
- ✓ Superb online or off
- ✗ Not as tactically demanding as some would like

91

A vintage year and the best in the series to date



Man down!
Man down!

You can almost feel the heat.



Vehicles make their debut in *Unreal Tournament 2004*.



The classic DM_morpheus is back and looking better than ever.

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

■ £29.99 | Pub: Ubisoft | Dev: Ubisoft |
ETA: Out Now | www.beyondgoodandevil.com

REQUIRES PIII 700, 128MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card
DESIRES P4 1.6GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Keith Pullin always struggled to tell the difference between good and evil. Sometimes though, you just instinctively know when something's right...



Things can get pretty heated.



The main city on Hillys is like a futuristic Amsterdam.

THERE'S nothing like a good conspiracy theory to get the old brain going. There's also nothing like a foxy female lead to get other things going. Combine the two, and well, you can't go wrong, can you?

Beyond Good & Evil is the latest game from *Rayman* creator Michel Ancel. And it seems to us that this could be one designer who's just come of age in a major way.

RAY OF LIGHT

First thing's first, though; *BGE* is the sort of cute, harmless, family action game that's traditionally more suited to consoles.

Rayman all over again then? Well, no. This is nothing like *Rayman*. In fact, *BGE* is virtually impossible to nail down into one

particular category, as it tends to shift from one genre to another with the speed of a bullet train.

One moment you're hopping from platform to platform like a mutated rabbit with a banger up your arse, and the next you're speeding around a racetrack in a hovercraft. Then, before you know it, you're pole-vaulting into a bubbling, viscous, mass of orange glop, before finally settling down in a bar with a well-earned drink and a game of air hockey against a giant upright, walking, talking walrus.

HERO OR ZERO?

The only thing constant is that the world of Hillys is under attack by an alien race known as the Domz – and it's up to you, Jade, a mere freelance photographer (albeit a very athletic one) to stop it all. Trouble is, who's telling the truth? Who can you trust? The government's Alpha Section controls all media and claims they're winning the war. The rebellious IRIS group, on the other hand, believes the Alphas have already allied with the Domz to take over the entire population.

Here is a game that's not only genre defying, it's quite possibly



Need a ride to *Grim Fandango*-land?

one of the weirdest games to ever appear on the PC. In fact, when it comes to atmosphere, story and personality, *Beyond Good & Evil* has a very similar feel to *Grim Fandango*.

Monsieur Ancel is also partial to diving into Shigeru Miyamoto's pot of ideas. Jade, our heroine and her eclectic friends live in a land abundant with rivers, oceans, caves, mountains and secrets galore. There are even heart containers to find that increase Jade's maximum health. Please. Is it possible to be any more *Zelda*?

Anyway, this beautiful world is yours to explore at will, and some of the most important items you can find are pearls. Pearls can only

be spent at the Rastafarian Rhinoceros' garage where, to the backdrop of a funky little reggae tune, you can buy various upgrades for your hovercraft that enable you to reach previously inaccessible parts of the world.

The amount of sub-games also rivals Nintendo's elfin adventure. Hover races present an opportunity to not only participate in pod-like blasts around four different tracks, but also offer the added incentive of a pearl should you win the race.

One of the biggest problems with games featuring large

INPERSPECTIVE

GRIM FANDANGO

Reviewed Issue 71, Score 90%

Great script, great humour, stunning graphics. One of the greatest action adventures the world has ever seen.

ENTER THE MATRIX

Reviewed Issue 130, Score 72%

Loads of conspiracy nonsense going on in a very character-based story. Not as slick as *BGE*, but well worth a go for the Bullet-Time kung fu stuff.



Knowing how to handle yourself in combat is essential, but learning how to dodge is just as important.

freeform play areas like this is that players can become confused and bored. *BGE* is so well structured, though, this is never an issue. By pressing the Tab button you can view a map of the world, as well as a list of your current objectives. You can also utilise devices that scan for pearls and animals.

Presentation of everything, from the way you read the occasional emails and news updates through to flipping through your pearl collection to see which ones you've missed, is incredibly clear and intuitive. Bill Gates would do well to look into the person responsible for this system and hire them to work on the Windows interface.

In all, there are dozens of sub-games, side-quests and other diversions offering everything from the aforementioned heart containers

and pearls through to even more curious rewards like taking photos of rare Hillyan animals for extra cash. Young Jade is a freelance photographer after all – we've all got to make a proper living somehow.

SUPPORT ACTS

There's so much to do in *BGE* that the chances of becoming bored are virtually non-existent. Another more calculated reason for becoming totally absorbed in the game is the strong support cast. Your partners and sidekicks exemplify this by not only spitting out fantastically acted witty one-liners, but by also providing timely hints and tips. But that's only half the story...

You have several sidekicks who help

you through your adventures, all of which are incredibly charismatic such as Double H, the lumbering Buzz Lightyear wannabe. Despite his lack of mental agility,

"There's so much to do, the chances of becoming bored are non-existent"



GET SNAP HAPPY

FORGET MOBILE PHONE CAMERAS, THIS IS THE PUPPY YOU WANT

Another delightfully quirky feature of *BGE* is the ability to take photographs of the spectacular Hillyan wildlife. Some of these species are common like humans and flies; others, like the flying mantis and the clown snail are extremely scarce. The rarer the species you snap, the more credits you receive. But there are other reasons for taking photographs. Some missions require you to gather evidence to send back to base – and what better tool than a camera? As an added bonus, your camera can be used as a scanner. Just focus on an object or person and you're instantly regaled with all the information you need.



Now that's something you don't see very often – take a photo!



Hmm, it all seems to have gone a bit *Harry Potter*.

IRIS's main covert operative always manages to appear (in true Buzz Lightyear fashion) in the nick of time. His entrances are often scripted to brilliant comic effect too, such as the way he tumbles down a rubbish shoot in a factory to land in front of a giant robot just as it's about to vaporise Jade. Genius.

STICK AROUND

Hold on a minute – this is all looking too good. If we carry on at this rate, *Beyond Good & Evil*'s going to go Classic. And while there's no doubt this is one hell of a game, there's room for improvement in the inevitable sequel (finish the game and you'll see what we mean).

The main disappointment is combat. Admittedly, it's smooth, easy to perform and satisfying as you bat enemy after enemy into oblivion, but it's nowhere near as compelling as it should be. The Bullet-Time effects are impressive, but ultimately the fact that Jade has only one main

melee weapon (a dai-jo stick) severely restricts the thrill.

Most fights degenerate into repeatedly pressing the left mouse button. As the game progresses, timing comes into it more (as does actually having to block). A spinning disc also becomes available – and this adds a long-range element to the battles. Still, a big stick and a frisbee is not the most impressive arsenal for a secret agent. If you want toys and gadgets, *Cate Archer of No One Lives Forever* fame is probably the lady for you.

BUT JADE'S BETTER LOOKING

One of the most blindingly obvious assets to *Beyond Good & Evil* is the way it looks. You don't have to appreciate much about art to realise this is one flash looking game. Everything from the animation on the main characters through to the stylish level design is first class. Not one blade of grass is out of place in the *BGE* world. Everything blends together perfectly, which is stunning considering the level of graphical variety present in the game.



Jade's expression reflects her predicament.



Take rare photos to earn extra cash.



Locals reveal some interesting information.

The ancient mine on Black Isle, for example, is full of weird organic plasma-like monsters and bubbles. In stark contrast, the Nutrpils factory harbours biomechanical robots, deadly laser beams, elevators and a host of other technology-related

obstacles and denizens. And then there's Hillys' main city, which is a cross between a quaint fishing village from the *Monkey Island* games and the city from *The Fifth Element*. The levels may be diverse, but style, humour and fluidity link

MISSED OPPORTUNITY



Show me the guns.

WOT NO GUNS?

Weapons – it has to be the weapons. How can you have an action game with just one weapon? OK, you can do several different moves with it and it makes pretty patterns in the air when you spin around, but does it fire bullets? No it bloody doesn't. We want to see a sequel, and we want to see it with more guns, rockets and exploding things.

Leave us with just one lousy stick next time round Ubisoft, and you'll be the one getting stick. You have been warned.



SECOND OPINION

ANTHONY HOLDEN

I don't know what's the greater achievement: the sheer quality and playability of *Beyond Good & Evil*, or the fact that a French game has somehow managed to capture the charm of the great Japanese platform adventures. And there we were thinking Rare (*Banjo-Kazooie*) was the only one who could do that.

I always found *Rayman* to be a detestable, garlic-sucking little oik, but this game is in a completely different class altogether. It's not without the usual camera problems that tend to plague the genre, and there's a bit too much *Zelda* in here if anything (even the ever-present camera is cribbed from *Majora's Mask* on the N64). But the bottom line is that *Beyond Good & Evil* is one of the finest action-adventure games to come to the PC in years. If you've got a stomach for cartoon cuteness (and haven't we all?), miss this at your peril.

it all together in a way that Miyamoto himself would be proud of.

GOOD TRIUMPHS

Beyond Good & Evil reaffirms why gaming is so great, and why it's important to keep developing games that aren't sequels or based on films, books or any other kind of licence.

OK, hard core action fans will be disappointed with the combat, but if you can forgive that and just accept *BGE* for the brilliantly crafted piece of emotionally riveting storytelling and all round gameplay excellence that it is, you will be letting yourself in for one of the greatest gaming experiences of your life. [A-]

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Beautifully realised characters
- ✓ Easy to use interface and controls
- ✓ Great story
- ✓ Variety of gaming styles
- ✗ A bit short (12 hours)
- ✗ Simplistic combat

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Gaming at its emotional best





ALIENWARE
THE ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE



"An imposing, almighty hulk of pure gaming power, madly straining at the leash."

- PC Gamer UK, September 2003

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X2: THE THREAT

■ £34.99 | Pub: Deep Silver | Dev: Egosoft |
ETA: February 6 | www.egosoft.com

REQUIRES PIII 800, 128MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card
DESIRES P4 2GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Calming, beautiful to look at and filled with depth and wonder. And no, we're not talking about Paul Presley...



Is someone humming the *Imperial March*?

Those Beyblades are getting fancier and fancier.



Sure, they're big and heavy to tow. But the market for exploding planets is currently on the up.



SPACE, as the man said, is big. Of course, until now the accepted wisdom was also that space is very, very black. Or at least whatever that colour is that you get when you remove all light and replace it with dark matter. Or whatever space is made from. Look, don't ask me. I'm not an astronaut. I play games for a living. It's confusing enough just working out why people don't all fall sideways when they walk down the street.

Anyway, space. The inky black void. Except for in the wonderful world of *X2: The Threat*, where it appears that space has been remodelled by Jackson Pollock. In the middle of a paint factory explosion. On acid. Even Stanley Kubrick would have baulked at this.

FICKLE START

Which has probably given you all the impression that I think *X2* is one ugly mother of a beast. The Ann Widdecombe of space simulations. But a single glance

at any one of the lovingly presented screenshots accompanying these words will show up that supposition to be wrong. Very, very wrong. In fact, I'll go out on a limb right here, before I've even had time to erect a literary safety net or anything, and state that there won't be a better looking game all year. Unless *Half-Life 2* bothers to show up of course, in which case it's the second best.

I mean, look at it! Go on, have a glance around these pages. Flick back and forth. Turn them upside down. Lie alongside them in the bed, caressing their neck and making soft cooing noises. They're gorgeous aren't they? *X2* is one of those games that art departments love as it's almost impossible to make it look bad.

Forgive me for going on about something so facile as a game's visuals so early on, but sometimes you have to let yourself wallow in the surface delights before you plunge headlong into the meaty stew at

the heart of things. And if that's not a tortured metaphor in desperate search of a linking crosshead, then I don't know what is...

LOVE, ACTUALLY

So, what is *X2: The Threat* then? Obviously, a platform romp set during medieval Europe. One cunningly disguised, mind you, as a hardcore space-based trading and combat simulation, weaving elements of mysterious alien aggressors, long-lost explorers searching for a way home and the touching tale of a wayward boy discovering the true nature of his father. Sounds a bit like *Star Wars*, come to think of it.

Before I get started on this extended love letter to *X2*'s developer, Egosoft, I might as well temper it with a bit of criticism. The story aspects of

INPERSPECTIVE

FREELANCER

Reviewed Issue 128, Score 84%

If *X2* is your ponderous European art house movie that wins all the awards at Cannes, *Freelancer* is your big-budget no-brainer Hollywood action movie that makes all the bucks and has Paul 'Rent-a-quote' Ross saying how "awesome" it is on the poster.

EVE ONLINE

Reviewed Issue 130, Score 88%

Slower going than *X2* (if that's possible), but with the major difference being that it's all online. The basic lesson is that Europeans do thoughtful space operas far better than the Americans and their whiz-bang action.



MISSED OPPORTUNITY



I dunno... Camp 1930s sci-fi heroes maybe?

WHAT DO YOU GET THE GAME THAT'S GOT VIRTUALLY EVERYTHING?

To be honest, it's hard to think what Egosoft has left out of X2. There's no multiplayer, but then that's going to be covered big-time by *X2 Online* later this year. You can't land on the planets, but then why would you want to? I suppose you could ask for the mission structure to be more detailed, but it's not like there isn't loads to do anyway. Nope, sorry. There's no missed opportunity to be had. All the game lacks is a small touch of the old spit and polish. And space monkeys. Yeah, space monkeys would be good.

the game are nothing to fax home about. The plot, while fun enough, is one of cliché and predictability. The FMV animations used to further proceedings are distinctly unimpressive (let's just say that facial rendering isn't exactly Egosoft's strongest point). And while we're at it, the interface isn't the most natural in the world, and too often you find yourself accidentally opening the wrong information windows.

SIMPLY THE BEST

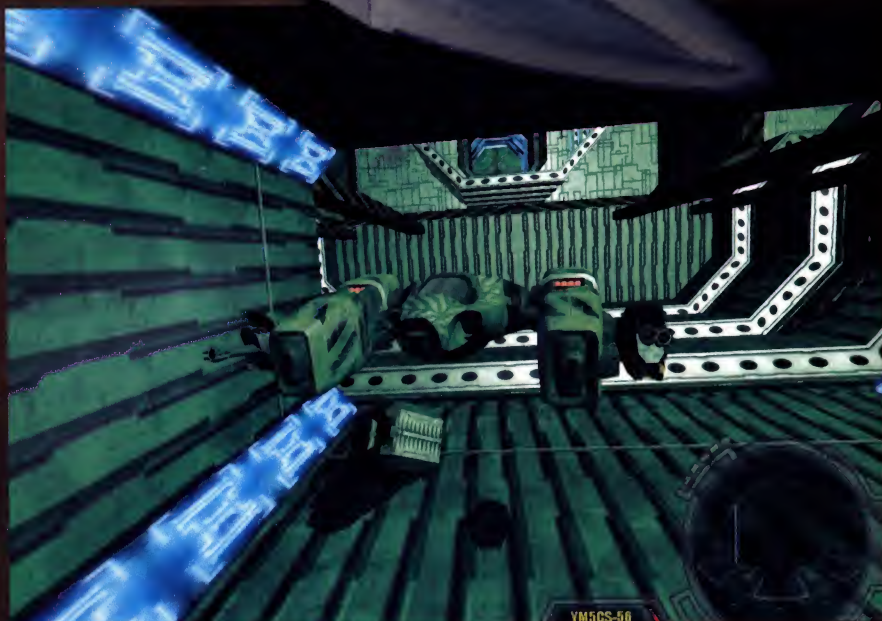
Right, that's everything negative I can currently think of to say about X2, all done in a single paragraph, so as not to pollute the rest of the review. Because putting all that to one side, what we have here is perhaps the finest game to strap on its space-trading boots since the seminal *Elite*. It's better than *Freelancer*, better than *EVE Online*, better than the original *X: Beyond The Frontier*, better than any number of *Privateers*, *Battlecruisers*, *Freespaces* and *Frontiers*. Best, best, best. Am I making this clear enough?

Justify yourself then, man. Well, for a start, Egosoft has thought of everything. Anyone that played the first X, way back when, couldn't help but be impressed by the ambition on show. Okay, some found it slow-going at first and as such never gave it a fair shake. But those who persevered long enough to get their first engine booster suddenly found a virtual universe of possibility. Accompanied by a universe of untapped potential.

Why couldn't we buy other ships? Why couldn't we run factories of our own? Why couldn't we control wingmen or order other pilots or this, that and the other? We're greedy bastards basically, and we demand satisfaction.

AS GOOD AS IT GETS

Which is exactly what Egosoft has delivered. Satisfaction on a great big gaming plate, decorated with gameplay garnishings and covered with game design sauce. Everything we asked for in *X: Beyond The Frontier* has been delivered – and then some. Want to trade



You can find bonus crates in stations. This one's full of Turkish Delight.

your starting ship in for a bigger model? Earn the money and go ahead. In fact, why not buy yourself an entire fleet, issue them with all sorts of trading orders and create a business empire to rival Richard Branson?

Not content with just shipping goods about? So buy

yourself a manufacturing factory, start making high-grade weapons platforms and sell them to others. Or buy a raft of factories, all supplying each other. Or set up a pirate base on the edge of a system, fill it with fighters and hunt, loot and pillage to your heart's content.

Or this, that and the other, basically, but ten times as much.

AND THERE'S MORE...

But, and here's the beauty part, the satisfaction isn't just in how big everything can get, but how much small detail has been packed in here. Buy a cargo

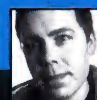
A SPOT OF AI DIY

10 PRINT "PREZ IS BEST"; 20 GOTO 10

All you 133t haxx0rs out there might be interested to learn that you don't have to limit yourselves to just the AI routines available within the game. Egosoft has cleverly made it possible for you to program your own detailed command structures in the real world, then upload them into the game to apply to your massive fleet. You can make them as detailed as you like and then trade them with fellow players using the game's website. All sounds a bit *Matrix*-like if you ask me, but that's no bad thing.



Total control: it's the way forward.



SECOND OPINION

RICHIE SHOEMAKER

X: Beyond The Frontier was a solid tribute to the mighty *Elite*, and *X2: The Threat* is a more than worthy successor – and light years ahead in the graphics stakes.

With such a large stage to explore and a testing range of roles to play as, there's a real vibrancy to the game. The dynamics and depth convey a world that's as easy to get lost in as it is enjoyable. In fact, if it wasn't for the lack of chatter and a squealing modem, you'd almost think you were playing online, such is the detail lavished upon it.

Of course, the game can be overbearing – outside of the obvious hardware demands – and the learning curve is steep. The pace outside of the story is also rather slow, but rewards for steady advance are huge. And even without a multiplayer option, there's huge scope for replayability.

Now that's a big ship.

ship, for instance, and you'll get a basic model that can fly from A to B. Buy its onboard computers some advanced trading software though, and you can get it to make specific deals by itself. Upgrade it even further and you can have it hunt around by itself for the best deals.

All of which costs money, of course. The trading system is just as intricate, with a dynamic economy that constantly reacts to local supply and demand. If you're canny enough (and have enough starting capital), you can even force certain shifts in the prices for different goods, opening up holes in the market that work to your advantage.

The level of detail is immense. It practically never stops. You can fly around *inside* space stations, for god's sake. And then choose where to park. And then get out of your ship and fly about in a space suit examining other ships parked there. And then find hidden crates with bonus weapons, goods or tools inside.

I don't know about you, but that's the kind of stuff that makes my brain go gooey with

delight. It's like putting a feather cap on in *Super Mario World* and then discovering a hidden level up in the clouds.

IT'S A-ME

Okay, time for another brief negative. Combat isn't great. It takes a lot of getting used to and the rapid manoeuvring required isn't really suited to mouse controls. In fact, *X2* is one of the few games that still work better with a joystick in your hand. And the larger battles do eat up a lot of processor power. However, it's forgivable, and with patience and ship upgrades you can get the hang of it. And with the many, many weapon options available to you, there's a lot of scope for epic battles.

Which are spectacular, it must be said, especially when you start messing about with capital ships. In fact, the final battle in the storyline is very nicely handled, with all sorts going on and genuine tension derived from the plot mechanics. The best thing is that the game doesn't end once the story's over. You're free to carry on and trade away, as chances are you



"This is satisfaction on a big gaming plate, garnished with game design sauce"

It may not look like much, but at least it's weak.

still won't have seen half of what's on offer by this point.

MORE PAGES

Thing is, I'm sure I've still forgotten dozens of other things that I want to tell you about *X2*. I'll go home tonight after submitting this review and think, "Shit, I wanted to say something about the satellites that enable you to control your property from other parts of the galaxy. Oh, and the multiple monitor system that means you can watch three different things at once. Oh, and the massive size of the

universe." And so on. And on. It's that kind of game. The kind you tell your mates about down the pub and have them go, "Wow!" in response.

Some might try to tell you that it isn't that great. Some may cry: "Too slow!" and "Where's the action?" These people are simply showing the depths of their ignorance. *X2: The Threat* is one of the few examples of intelligent gaming left out there. If you want to waste your brain cells on pointless shooters and dumbed-down platformers, that's up to you. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Beautiful
- ✓ Mind-boggling amounts of detail
- ✓ Build an entire empire or just go exploring
- ✓ Intelligent real-time economy
- ✗ Manual combat's a bit tricky
- ✗ Interface and animations need some polish

92

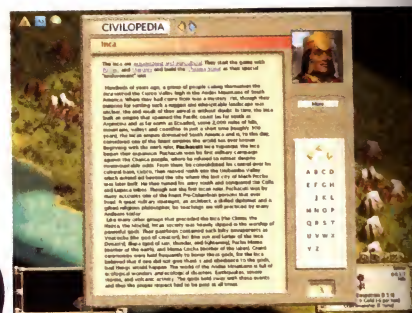
The best space game ever

CIVILIZATION III: CONQUESTS

■ £29.99 | Pub: Atari | Dev: Firaxis | ETA: Out Now | www.civ3.com

REQUIRES PII 400, 128MB RAM, 8MB 3D card and an Internet connection for multiplayer DESIRES 256MB RAM or better

It's a *Civ III* expansion pack for clever people. Unfortunately, Chris Anderson nabbed it when we weren't looking



The trusty Civopedia, for when you genuinely have no clue what you're doing.

WHEN YOU create a game that effectively covers most of the human evolutionary ladder, your next step isn't immediately obvious. And with *Conquests*, Firaxis has decided to polish and refine *Civ III*, rather than take it in radical new directions. For long-standing *Civ* fans, this is clearly a good thing. But if you're only casually interested, you may want to raise questions about the lack of a visual overhaul. The *Civ* series is surely long overdue one.

The result is that if you've previously had no interest in the game, there's nothing here to attract you. But if you're a confirmed *Civ* addict, you'll find an abundance of features that make this expansion a must-have purchase.



Civilization III: Conquests features nine new scenarios, all of which provide intriguing diversions from the main game. For the most part, they concentrate on historic landmarks in warfare such as the rise and fall of Rome, the Napoleonic wars and the

Japanese shogun wars, and provide a relatively short *Civ*-fix if you have neither the time nor patience to play through the main campaign.

NEW WORLDS

Seven new civilisations are also on offer including the Hittites,

Byzantines, Sumerians and the long-awaited Dutch. Of particular note is the inclusion of the *Play The World* expansion. While *PTW* was a bit of a mess, with bugs and connectivity problems a major issue on release, Firaxis has duly set about fixing it and is now giving it away for free with *Conquests*, bless it.

Finally, the Firaxis tweak-stick has hit the main campaign big-time and if you're a veteran returning to *Civ III*, you'll find the main game more finely tuned and balanced than ever before.

"The Firaxis tweak-stick has hit the main campaign big-time"



Our sceptred isle during the Napoleonic wars. In miniature, obviously.

Civ III lovers, the first proper expansion is finally here, and with the addition of *Play The World*, there's little or no reason why you shouldn't go out and buy this excellent package, one which offers something to both the hardcore and casual *Civ III* fan in equal measures. Let the conquering begin. [C]



World War II, in glorious *Civ*-ovision.

INPERSPECTIVE

ALPHA CENTAURI

Reviewed Issue 132, Score 77%

If *Civ* in space is what you want, *Civ* in space is what you'll get with *Alpha Centauri*.

EMPIRE EARTH

Reviewed Issue 110, Score 80%

Empire Earth doesn't have the depth of *Civ* but it does feature real-time action.



New scenarios, new civs, a free expansion, what more d'ya want?



Keep an eye on your resources, or lack thereof.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ More depth and complexity than ever
- ✓ Excellent, detailed scenarios
- ✓ *Play The World* expansion included
- ✗ No visual enhancements
- ✗ Multiplayer still sometimes crashes

84

A major conquest for Firaxis. Arf arf



For some reason, giant mushrooms are always rife in alien landscapes.

URU: AGES BEYOND MYST

■ £34.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | Dev: Cyan Worlds | ETA: Out Now | uru.ubi.com

REQUIRES PIII 800, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D Card DESIRES P4 1.4GHz and 512MB RAM

Rhianna Pratchett parts the mysts of time

THE MYST series and its wannabes have definitely become a sub-genre of adventure games in their own right – and with the current flaccid state of the genre as a whole, it's nice to see at least something more cerebral than gun-toting doing well.

Uru: Ages Beyond Myst takes place in the present day, but contains more than a few homages to the previous games.

INPERSPECTIVE

BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

Reviewed Issue 136, Score 75%

The latest incarnation of the well-known *Broken Sword* series, for people who like a more familiar style of point-and-click adventure with state of the art 3D graphic and lots of crate pushing.

MYST III: EXILE

Reviewed Issue 109, Score 35%

If you're more into static-screened 2D adventure games, any of the previous *Myst* games should do you. Slow-paced and full of puzzles, they're an acquired taste – one that we've never acquired.



A hologram message from the past.

The story revolves around the culture and history of the D'ni, a technologically advanced city hidden beneath the deserts of New Mexico.

Developer Cyan Worlds has always tended to create beautiful-looking 2D environments and alien

landscapes that would have benefited further from being in 3D. *Real Myst* attempted a basic 3D environment back in 2000, which was certainly novel for fans, if not strictly up to the standards of most other 3D games. However, *Uru* pushes the boundaries even further.

“The third-person viewpoint tends to hamper puzzle solving”



Quick, nick the traffic cone!



This is the stop-off point between the different worlds.

Consequently, the sound is also far more impressive than in previous titles, while the graphics often verge on stunning.

Gameplay is still what you would expect from a *Myst* title: lots of tinkering around with puzzles, but they're not the kind you'd find in an average adventure game no-brainer, as they're satisfyingly challenging. The atmosphere captures you from the off, and the gentle pace of it all immerses you into its beautifully realised world.

single-player game's problem of an almost unpopulated game world, as it aims to let you work with other human players to solve puzzles and explore more new areas.

Undoubtedly, *Uru*'s graphical maturity and the online aspect will attract new players, but the slow pace of it all will no doubt put action junkies off completely. For the fans it's a real gem, but if you're a point-and-click purist, you simply may not get it. **[B+]**

ONLY THE LONELY

Uru can be a very lonely experience indeed. There are very few other NPCs, and most of the information you get is written on parchments and diaries. If you're used to more traditional point-and-click adventures, full of interesting and amusing characters, there's little here to keep you coming back for more.

Although it wasn't up and running at the time of writing, the addition of *Uru Live* should address the

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Stunning graphics
- ✓ Sounds good
- ✓ Includes an online element
- ✓ Cerebral
- ✗ Lack of momentum
- ✗ Limited gameplay

71

Beautiful if limited, but a real improvement for the *Myst* series



V-RALLY 3

■ £19.99 | Pub: Atari | Dev: Eden Games |
ETA: Out Now | www.vrally3.com

REQUIRES PIII 800, 128MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card
DESIRES P4 1.8GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Keith Pullin remembers what it's like to feel the filth on his exhaust

THE LAST rally game to really grab me was *Colin McRae 2.0* on the PS2. Sure, I've dabbled here and there with some *NFS* games, *Colin 3* and even the first two *V-Rally* games, but the truth is, it's been a long time since a PC rally game has kept me hooked.

So, it's difficult to say whether I'm delighted or annoyed that *V-Rally 3* has managed to do just that. It's the kind of game that keeps calling you back to play it in a small muffled voice, even when it's buried under ten other CDs and you know you're supposed to be writing a review for something else entirely.

COME DRIVE WITH ME

Probably the greatest assets of *V-Rally 3* are its gorgeous backgrounds and completely breakable cars. Graphically, the game is a delight to look at, but don't be fooled – there's just as much substance as style.

The career mode is great fun, especially the way you're offered

test-drives during the season. If you succeed in your test-drive (which usually means beating the time of a computer controlled racer who's going for the same 'job'), you get to join that team at the end of the current season.

And it's certainly worth moving around to try out the different team packages. Among other things, you have to take into consideration attributes such as speed, morale and budget. It's all well and good joining a team with a lightning quick car, but if they have low morale and no budget, that car is unlikely to be uncompetitive at the end of the season.

FULL THROTTLE

V-Rally 3 also offers two different classes of rallying. The 1.6 litre engine is effectively beginner mode and sure enough, I managed to win the rally of England by more than two minutes over my nearest rival. However, once you've got a few seasons under your belt in this mode and proved you're ready to cut it with the big boys, you're offered the chance to race in the 2.0 litre 4x4 event. This is not only more challenging, but introduces you to new tracks too.

Talking of which, the amount of tracks available is highly impressive, and they all have a distinct feel to them. You may be able to scream around the



One way to get a parking spot near the beach...

French countryside at breakneck speeds, but come Finland and the snow, you'll have to get out the studded tyres and steer in a completely different way.

So, do we love *V-Rally 3*? In the main, although there are a few odd quirks to temper the overall enjoyment. For a start, your car never leaves the ground, even when it hits the crest of a hill at 115mph. Plus, for some reason aquaplaning induces terrible slowdown.

Apart from that, though, *V-Rally 3* is an extremely sturdy rally game. It's not quite up to *Colin*'s standards, but it's not too far off – and it's a damn sight cheaper as well. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Very slick career mode
- ✓ Must adapt driving style to conditions
- ✓ Looks wonderful
- ✓ Great value for money
- ✗ Some slow down
- ✗ Poor physics system

79

Cheap as chips and just as tasty



Oops. Should have drunk the mulled wine after the rally.



It's a great feeling when you nail a hairpin turn.



There's nothing the French like more than making life difficult for everyone.





Now where did I put my English-to-Russian phrase book?



The sea looks a little plastic, but it's good enough.



LOCK ON: AIR COMBAT SIMULATION



■ £34.99 | Pub: Ubisoft | Dev: Eagle Dynamics | ETA: Out Now | www.io-mac.com

REQUIRES PIII 800, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card DESIRES P4 2.4GHz, 512MB RAM and a 128MB 3D card

Daniel Emery takes a look at this impressive-looking modern-day combat flight sim

RICK ASTLEY; T'Pau; Strawberry Switchblade; jet combat flight sims – words associated with a bygone era. But one of them is making a comeback. No, not Strawberry Switchblade, but the jet combat flight sim. And, just like every other fantastic flight sim of late, it's been developed in Russia.

The action centres on the Black Sea region and, in a nutshell, pits NATO forces against the former USSR. Although you're limited to flying one of just eight aircraft, there are in fact over 50 different AI-controlled planes in the game. At the time of going to press though, the official developer line was



Whoooooosh!



Kerpow!

that "the list of flyable aircraft is frozen for the initial release". However, it did also say that the "addition of more flyable aircraft is being given serious consideration". Hmmm.

UNLIMITING FACTOR

Thankfully, the limited number of aircraft doesn't detract much from the game and there's a load of things you can do in flight – other than just blow things out of the sky. Flying the F-15C or A-10A, you can refuel in mid-air from the KC-10, as well as do the same with the Russian Su-33 from the IL-78.

You can also just fly about admiring the view – the 100,000 square miles of terrain contains 16,000km of roads, 2,400 km of railways, 20,000km of rivers, 180,000 buildings, 15,000,000 trees, 21 cities, 500 bridges, well... you get the gist. But all this stunning eye candy is very taxing on your hardware. We played the game on a P4 2.4GHz with a GeForce FX5600 and it struggled to get anything over 20 frames a second. Hmmm again.

But the main reason for playing *Lock On* is combat. Lots of combat. And here it delivers – which is both a good and a bad thing. You see, there's two schools of thought on combat flight sims. There's the one that likes to get up close and personal, and there's the one that likes to see a small dot on the screen and fire off a long-range missile (imagine playing *Call Of Duty* by radar and you'll be close to what I'm talking about). *Lock On*

belongs firmly to the latter school. That's not to say you can't get in close and use the cannon – the A-10A Warthog was designed to do just that – it's just that modern air-to-air combat doesn't work that way. Try and bounce a pack of F15s and you'll have ten Sidewinders up your arse in no time.

Lock On is one of the best modern jet combat flight sims about – but it's also one of the only modern jet combat flight sims about. It looks good, the flight models are good, physics and ballistics seem accurate and there's a diverse range of things to kill. But you rarely get the adrenaline rush associated with WWII flight sims such as *IL-2 Sturmovik* or *WarBirds III*. This is no slight on the developer, it's just the way of modern air combat. **[C+]**

INPERSPECTIVE

IL-2: FORGOTTEN BATTLES

Reviewed Issue 128, Score 92%

If you prefer WWII combat, this is visually stunning and has a near-perfect flight model.

FALCON 4

Reviewed Issue 72, Score 95%

The undisputed king of jet flight sims in its day. Five years on, it still looks fantastic. Just like *Lock On*, it's a serious flight sim with a steep learning curve.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ It's a modern jet flight sim
- ✓ Hard, but not too hard
- ✓ Looks lush
- ✗ It's a modern jet flight sim
- ✗ Views can get tricky at times
- ✗ Large number of keys to memorise

80

Does exactly what it says on the tin

"The main reason to play *Lock On* is combat. Lots of combat"

TERMINATOR 3: WAR OF THE MACHINES

■ £34.99 | Pub: Atari | Dev: Clevers Games Development |
ETA: Out Now | www.t3war.com

REQUIRES PIII 1GHz, 128MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

DESIRES A P4 CPU, 256MB RAM and detailed files on human anatomy to make you a more efficient killer

"I know now why you cry," sobs Martin Korda after playing this team-based shooter



"I like your gun": there's a half-decent selection of weapons.



I need your clothes, your boots and your skin.

"Arnie looks like a shorn Ozzy Osbourne on steroids sporting leather-clad midget legs"

There's no fate other than that we make for ourselves. That's humanity bugged then.

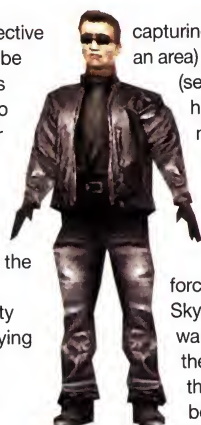
THREE BILLION human lives ended on August 29, 1997. It's a miracle it wasn't more. A race facing a nuclear winter, unable to feed themselves after the world's food supplies were obliterated by several thousand well-placed atom bombs, and to top it all off, an army of cybernetic organisms intent on wiping out the dregs of humanity with state of the art

weaponry and a collective will that simply can't be reasoned with. That's your starting scenario for *Terminator 3: War Of The Machines*. Pretty bleak, huh?

HUMAN FOOLS

The game gives you the chance to save or exterminate humanity once and for all, playing either as humans or Terminators over a collection of varied levels based in the present (including locations from the *Terminator 3* movie) and in the blackened-skied future. But while the films enraptured millions with their classic action-sequences, witty dialogue and intelligently crafted storylines, *War Of The Machines* is likely to do the opposite.

Playing the three different game types – Termination (base



capturing), Mission (hold/overrun an area) and Team Deathmatch (self explanatory) – as humans is admittedly more fun, though sadly for all the wrong reasons. While it's understandable that the cream of humanity's fighting force was wiped out by Skynet's incisive strike on a warm summer's day back in the '90s, it's hard to believe that what was left could be quite so incapable. Example? Men jumping into jeeps and driving into walls. Reversing, then driving into the same wall. And again, and again... You get the idea.

Which kind of leaves it up to you to win the war – or rather, each of the unconnected levels – all on your own. And if you rocket to the top of the killboard, you win the right to play as Arnie himself. At least I think it's Arnie, as here he looks more like a

shorn Ozzy Osbourne on steroids sporting leather-clad midget legs.

YOU WON'T BE BACK

Playing as a Terminator isn't nearly as satisfying, as scything down the idiot rabble that is humanity soon becomes tedious. In fact, no matter who you play as or how hard you set the level of difficulty, you'll never struggle to top the killboard or fear your team is about to be annihilated. And that's where the real problem lies with this game.

Human weapons and Terminator model classes (ranging from T1s to T900s) are many and varied, and the smaller, more enclosed levels can sometimes reach the dizzy heights of 'almost exciting', as you and your comrades battle to hold a base against the machines. However, the cumbersome larger levels, lack of teamwork and the poor AI generally make the whole

experience limper than a three-legged dog convention.

No doubt it'll be better when you play with or against humans (we'll be reviewing the multiplayer game separately in a couple of issues), but as a single player experience it won't be long before you're gripped by the urge to say 'hasta la vista, baby' and self-terminate. **PCZ**

INPERSPECTIVE

BATTLEFIELD 1942: DELUXE EDITION

Reviewed Issue 136, Score 85%
Featuring the original game and the *Road To Rome* expansion pack, *Battlefield 1942* suffers from the same problem as *War Of The Machines*, in that its bots are imbeciles. It's brilliant online though. **UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004** Reviewed Issue 138, Score 91%
If team-based arena action with vehicles and intelligent bots is your bag, then you won't find better than this little baby.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ You get to play as Arnie
- ✓ Fair selection of levels, classes, vehicles and weapons
- ✗ Moronic bots
- ✗ Feels like a scuffle, not a war
- ✗ Single-player game's patronisingly easy
- ✗ Arnie looks like Ozzy

49

Terminated



Palace Hotel: First Floor



How we felt while playing this game.



Ugly. Dull. Confusing. 'Nuff said.



We asked these guys if they could think of anything positive to say about *Chicago 1930*.

CHICAGO 1930

£29.99 | Dev: Spellbound | Pub: Wanadoo | ETA: February 6 | www.chicago1930-game.com

REQUIRES: PIII 500, 128MB RAM and an 8MB 3D card DESIRES: A PIII 733 should do you

Even Catherine Zeta-Jones couldn't have saved this strategy game, says Steve O'Hagan

1930S Chicago was a city gripped by prohibition. The only way you could get a drink was by frequenting a Mafia-run speakeasy, or brewing some of your own illegal moonshine. Today in the UK it couldn't be more different, with anyone over 12 years old practically forced to consume copious amounts of alcopops and imported lager by ceaseless advertising and peer pressure. Which, in the case of *Chicago 1930* is a good thing, as the only way you're likely to get any sort of tangible enjoyment from this game is to play it while you're horribly drunk.

Chicago 1930 puts you in charge of a small group of either Mafia hoodlums or FBI officers. You then lead this hand-picked

team on missions to either wrest control of the city from rival gangs, or to clean the place up, depending on your side.

The action is in real-time, with you commanding your team to go about its task, whether it be to capture a mob boss alive or waste a load of rival hoods. Essentially, *Chicago 1930* is *Commandos* in pinstripe suits. Granted, the emphasis is a little more on puzzle solving, but like *Desperados* before it (*Commandos* in the Wild West, also by developer Spellbound),

Chicago 1930 feels like an imitation, and a paltry one at that.

SECOND-RATE

There are two fundamental issues at play as to why this is a must-not-have title. The first is *Chicago*'s amateurish lack of quality, which is abundantly evident right from the start. You pick up an object, but you have no idea what it is: no tips, no help. You drag away the corpse the police are photographing, but they continue snapping away at an empty floor.

Want more? Well, you also get punched unconscious by a hoodlum, yet the game says you've been 'inadvertently' knocked out. Plus, you have a vicious fist-fight with one thug, while the other, standing about five feet away, doesn't notice because he has his back turned. It's gut-churningly poor. Even telling friend from foe is a nightmare when your team and the similarly suited enemy are clustered in the same room.

ZZZZZZZZZ...

But the second, more important issue is that everything is so irredeemably tedious. Fighting: a crap mouse click-fest. The puzzles: either elementary and signposted, or inscrutable and illogical. The humour: German. It's one of those games that you want to stop playing almost as soon as you start. Summoning up the patience to graduate from the first level alone is a mammoth task.

Okay, it's got some nice ideas – every character you meet has an attitude symbol displayed above their head, as well as a 'wanted' status which shows whether you can get away with

arbitrarily blowing their brains out or not. And the music, lighting and sets do capture the mood well enough.

Our advice? Don't buy it. But if you don't believe us and are bizarrely fascinated by the prospect of an archaic gangster-themed RTS hybrid, then play the demo first to see just how bad it really is. **PCW**

INPERSPECTIVE

COMMANDOS 2:

MEN OF COURAGE

Reviewed Issue 138, Score 90%

The best alternative money can buy, especially as it's now available for a fiver. Read our review on page 91.

DESPERADOS

Reviewed Issue 103, Score 82%

Set in the Wild West, it's superior to this, but not quite as good as *Commandos 2*.



At least there are plenty of weapons on offer.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Decent period atmosphere
- ✓ Strewn with inconsistencies
- ✗ Terribly boring
- ✗ Awful combat
- ✗ Not even easy to pick up and play

25

We prohibit you from buying this



Outdoor areas are far more impressive than their dungeon counterparts.



Dungeon design is as it was in the original.



End of level bosses up the ante in each chapter.

DUNGEON SIEGE: LEGENDS OF ARANNA



■ £29.99 | Pub: Mad Doc Software/Gas Powered Games | Dev: Microsoft |
ETA: Out Now | www.microsoft.com/games/dungeonsiegeloa/

REQUIRES PIII 333, 128MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card DESIRES PIII 500, 256MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card

Hack and slash meets intelligent gameplay?
Perhaps not, says Chris Anderson

IF YOU sat down and penned a list of things you'd expect to see in the first official *Dungeon Siege* expansion, what would it include? New items, new creatures, new lands to explore, improved interface and a new storyline? Well, they're all here, but the only startling thing about *Legends Of Aranna* is there's nothing startling about it. It's a no-frills extension to the original – great news if you've completed the main campaign.

The new landscapes are as pretty and detailed as the old, the combat is still hectic but very

smooth, and with the lack of any real *Dungeon Siege* total conversions, *Legends* has come along at just the right time.

The only real disappointment if you've completed the main campaign is there's no way to import your high-level character into the expansion, which means you have to start all over from level one and work your way up. This means you're starting a new game from scratch, even though the storyline itself takes over where the original game left off.

NEW TO YOU

New features include improved inventory management and a new half-giant character. There's also a group awareness function which makes your characters more aware of danger, and a new pack mule which helps you in battle, instead of just hanging about carrying your stuff.

The obligatory evil arch rival comes in the form of the Shadow Jumper, who's intent on taking over the world. Much of the game revolves around chasing his trail from one place



Hello. Have you seen our Anna by any chance?

to another before a final confrontation. The story is fairly compelling, if a little on the clichéd side, but the overly cheesy voice-acting does leave a lot to be desired.

No surprises then, and the fact that *Legends* was farmed out to Mad Doc software tells its own story, in as much as it's pretty much an 'out the door' expansion. Nevertheless, it's a welcome and entertaining addition to an excellent game.



New improved inventory management is here.

INPERSPECTIVE

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

Reviewed Issue 118, Score 91%

If you want interesting dialogue and strategic combat instead of hack and slash, *Neverwinter Nights* is a much better choice.

DIABLO II

Reviewed Issue 93, Score 72%

This is where the 'less chat more splat' revolution began. Some people swear by *Diablo II*, but we prefer *Dungeon Siege*: it looks better, plays better and is better.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Improved interface and group management
- ✓ Includes the original game
- ✓ Graphics are still impressive
- ✗ It's still *Dungeon Siege* to a 'T'
- ✗ Cheesy voice-overs are rife
- ✗ Expensive if you already own *Dungeon Siege*

78

Predictable, but worthwhile nonetheless

However, as it's bundled with the original, if you already own *Dungeon Siege* you may feel aggrieved at having to fork out £30 for an expansion pack. Having said that, if you can get over this, and the fact that you have to start building up your character from scratch, you'll find that there are several days of classic *Dungeon Siege* gameplay to enjoy. And if you're a *Dungeon Siege* newcomer, it's the perfect package. **PCZ**



The Brits return to Oz-land, and rightly so.



That's what you get for being neutral.



The calm before the storm.



Nice dungarees. Whatever happened to Italian style?



Bloody Sunday sailors. A menace to the open sea they are.

VIRTUAL SKIPPER 3



■ £34.99 | Pub: Digital Jesters | Dev: Nadeo |
ETA: Out Now | www.vshq.com

REQUIRES PII 450, 64MB RAM and a 16MB 3D card

DESIRES P4 1.4GHz, 512MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card, plus a mate with a water pistol to recreate the spray

After issue 136's filth-laden preview, there'll be no more innuendos from *Paul Presley*. He's happy to carry on cruising...

INPERSPECTIVE

AQUANOX 2: REVELATION

Reviewed Issue 132, Score 68%
Because everyone who watched me play VS3 said "can you shoot the enemy"? And this is a water-based sim where you can.

THAMES RACER

Reviewed Issue 103, Score 48%

This arcade racer is scraping the barrel perhaps, but you try finding water-based racing sims. We're not exactly talking sci-fi FPS's in the genre popularity stakes here.

AS THE champion of the underdog, seeing the *Virtual Skipper* series make it to version three fills me with pride. It's good to see that originality still has a place in this world.

To bring you up to speed, *Virtual Skipper 3* is a highly effective simulation of competitive sailing. It looks gorgeous, it plays with sublime ease and it's got a picture of Ellen MacArthur MBE on the box. You couldn't ask for more.

For all the loveliness of the game engine, though, there are a few rough edges on show that weren't there in the previous incarnation. The AI is pretty non-existent, with opponent boats all following pre-determined routes. Also, the lack of a tutorial for novices – explaining basic sailing procedures – is a real

omission, making progress through the challenges a case of trial and error. And then there's the bug that removes the crews from opponents' boats.

SEA BREEZE

But all that gets forgotten the moment you take to the water, see the rustle of the breeze billowing your sails, feel the crash of the waves lapping at your hull and hear the laughter of your colleagues as they load up *Pro Evo 3* for the 700th time that afternoon. Not that you care, of course. Next to being Angelina Jolie's wetsuit, fishing and being cremated on a Viking funeral pyre, sailing is the most fun you can have on the water and VS3 captures that perfectly.

GET WHAT YOU GIVE

Which leads us to a caveat. If your interest in sailing is second only to your interest in the affairs of local French council elections, then let's be frank: VS3 will leave you as cold, wet and miserable as a day trip to Swansea. You get out of the game only as much as you're willing to put in.

There's precious little in the way of reward structure at work. Races don't end with cheering crowds, fireworks and latex-clad

lovelies proffering champagne. Just self-satisfaction and/or a few "GGs" (Good Games) from online competitors is about all you can expect.

It's a simulation at the end of the day, one dependent on enthusiasm from its audience to survive. A damn fine simulation mind you, but one that knows its market and is content to pander solely to it, picking up one or two inquisitive strays along the way.

For VS4, might I suggest a trip to the gaming factory and a rethink of the reward structure: a quick glance over the shoulder of several console sporting titles for an idea of how to attract and engage an audience wouldn't go amiss. For now though, it'll just be us crusty old seadogs messing about in the ocean and having a grand old time of it. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Best water effects in gaming
- ✓ Easy to use race/course builder
- ✓ Realistic weather physics
- ✓ Best sailing sim on the market
- ✗ Only sailing sim on the market
- ✗ Not much here for non-sailors

81

Come on in, the water's lovely

"Races don't end with latex-clad lovelies proffering champagne"

NBA LIVE 2004

■ £29.99 | Pub: EA | Dev: EA Sports |
ETA: Out Now | www.easports.com

REQUIRES PIII 600, 128MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card
DESIRES PIII 1.2GHz, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Mark Hill jumps through hoops again

LAST YEAR'S edition of *NBA Live* had the unusual advantage (for an EA Sports title) of not being another incremental improvement on a previous version. That's because there was no *Live 2002* for PC, and there were no other basketball contenders, so *Live 2003* was a welcome return for a spectacular and often overlooked sport sim.

Now, most Brits can't stomach a game of back and forth scoring, both the simulation and its real-life counterpart, as we're too used to the fine tactics and hard graft of football. A goal is an event, a basket is a forgettable and flickering instant, like gulping one of those white



Don't bother playing online unless you're really hardcore.

balls in Hungry Hippos. And *NBA Live* is usually just as fast.

However, *Live 2004* has slowed down a bit and



The new features only serve to complicate things.

another highly polished title. Yet despite the changes, it still feels much like the same game.

The slower pace should make it better, but it's still too fast for any tactics. But where it suffers most is the more complicated controls, with more buttons needed which just serve to confuse things. This makes it another case of being a game that's better on a console.

Unless the prospect of seeing each NBA player wearing the brand of shoes they use in real life excites you, stick with *Live 2003*. Maybe EA should give it another break next year.

PCZONE VERDICT **74**
Still excellent, still the same



You, just like this game, are distinctly below average.

POP IDOL

■ £24.99 | Pub: Codemasters | Dev: Hothouse Creations |
ETA: Out Now

THE MAINSTAY of the Saturday evening idiot zone, *Pop Idol* is widely revered for its telling portrayal of human emotions. Horse shit. It's nothing more than a conveyor belt of vacant youth bludgeoning their way through a series of dreary dirges under the eye of Pete 'I invented music' Waterman, and the high-trousered Simon Cowell.

It's the latter who's taken the money here, appearing

(quite appropriately) as a one-dimensional cartoon figure. Gameplay, such as it is, consists of tapping keys in time to Robbie and Britney impersonators, with your success or otherwise met by one of Cowell's trademark put-downs.

Not exactly what you buy a state-of-the-art PC for, this is clearly the domain of children and simpletons.

Steve Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

30

BEANOTOWN RACING

■ £19.99 | Pub: Zoo Digital |
Dev: Simian Industries | ETA: Out Now

A KART game based on *The Beano*, anyone? That's exactly what you have here. God only knows what the thinking was behind creating a *Mario Kart* rip-off based on the vintage comic, but it ticks all the boxes of the genre. Wacky weapons? Correct. Brightly coloured scenery? Check. A slew of characters lifted from the source material and forced into an array of unlikely vehicles? Present.

Despite the by-numbers approach, it's a competent racer – and annoyingly challenging on the higher levels. Throw in the obligatory unlockable elements, and there's enough to keep *Beano* fans happy for at least a couple of hours. Or you could just read the comic.

Steve Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

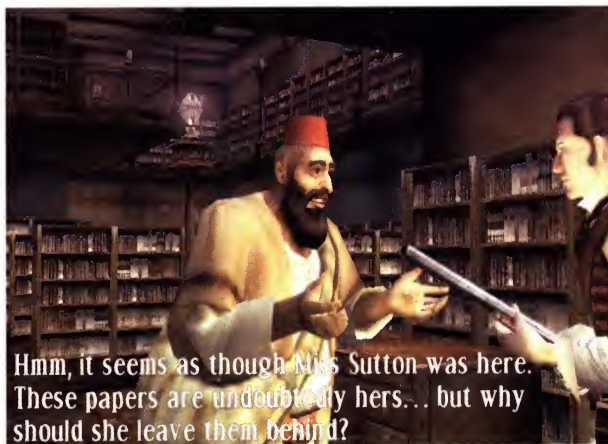
50



An apt word to describe this game.



The curse of Isis can induce terrible stomach ache.



Hmm, it seems as though Miss Sutton was here. These papers are undoubtedly hers... but why should she leave them behind?

Find some keys and you'll find the answers.

CURSE: THE EYE OF ISIS

■ £9.99 | Pub: Empire Interactive | Dev: Razorworks | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PIII 600, 128MB RAM and a 32MB 3D card DESIRES PIII 800, 256MB RAM and a 64MB 3D card

Keith Pullin curses his luck after playing another frighteningly mediocre thriller...

BEFORE WE start tearing into *Curse: The Eye Of Isis* like it's some kind of foul abomination, let's first make it clear that *Curse* is actually a very atmospheric game. If you want creepy, make-you-jump cut scenes that blend into gameplay along with tense, worrying music

that sends shivers down your spine, you may well enjoy *Curse* immensely. Of course, there is a 'but' to all this and it comes in the form of gameplay that simply doesn't match the tension.

First, as a direct clone of all the *Alone In The Dark* games, *Curse* doesn't have an original

line of code in it. Locations like the torture chamber may look scary and give you the chance to inadvertently behead and dismember some mutated museum staff, but ultimately there's nothing new here.

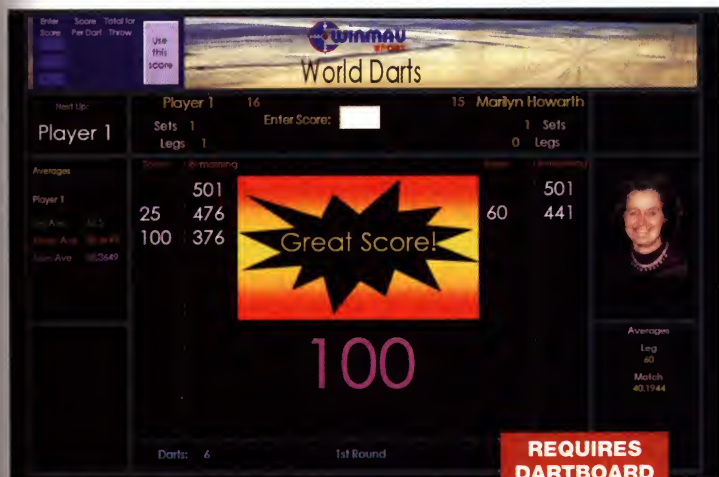
Games like this thrive on immersive puzzles and yet *Curse*

persists with find-the-key-for-the-door routines. And this is a shame, because with its interesting plotline which involves a master thief trying to steal an ancient Egyptian artefact, 'The Eye', and accidentally releasing some kind of evil spirit, there's scope for

some interesting scripting. Alas, no. All we get is A-to-B puzzles mixed with a huge amount of zombie splatting that takes you from London to The Pyramids.

Give *Curse* a go if you're after a fairly scary, atmospheric 3D action-adventure, but be warned: you'll have to be in a forgiving mood to get the most from the experience.

PCZONE VERDICT **57**
Atmospheric but lacking flair



Check me out!

REQUIRES DARTBOARD AND DARTS

WINMAU WORLD DARTS

■ £12.99 | Pub: Winmau | Dev: Mike Chadwick | ETA: Out Now

NOT SO much a game as a virtual opponent for PC-owning darts players. So long as you've got a dartboard within throwing distance of your PC, simply select the level of your opponent and you're under way, entering your real score while they counter on the screen. Absurd as it may seem, it actually makes for a decent game of arrows, replete with bellowed scores and appropriate applause.



As well as the traditional 501 – with recommended checkout shots – you can play variants such as Cricket and Around The Clock. It's a comprehensive package for solo players, with team games also available – and you can even enter a tournament, albeit a fictional one. Good fun, but it's an amateurish affair you wouldn't expect to pay money for.

Steve Hill

PCZONE VERDICT **40**

HARRY POTTER: QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP

■ £29.99 | Pub: EA | Dev: EA | ETA: Out Now

OBSCURE GAMES played by public schoolboys rarely get an outing as videogames, soggy biscuits not being an instantly transferable commodity. Quidditch and the boy Potter, however, can not only shift cauldrons of units, but also make a frenetic and fun sports game.

Imagine the splendour of gaming icon *Speedball 2* on broomsticks, although a kid-friendly non-violent version, with gorgeously smooth graphics and an emphasis on gloss as opposed to grit and tactics. Starting off in the confines of

Hogwarts before branching into the international World Cup, the game really does ooze charm.

Non-Potterites might not quite 'get it', the game itself being pretty shallow behind all the acrobatics, but a lot of love (and money) has clearly been piled into its production. It's for the kids, obviously, but it's without a doubt the best broomstick-based quaffle-chucker on the market.

Will Porter

PCZONE VERDICT **72**



Finally, you too can fly the remarkable Nimbus 2000.

TUROK: EVOLUTION

■ £19.99 | Pub: Acclaim | Dev: Acclaim Studios Austin | ETA: Out Now

IT'S HARD to believe games like this are still released on the PC. Badly ported, this FPS is an example of the worst kind of opportunistic, puss-faced, enthusiasm-over-talent games you're likely to see any time soon.

Graphics which would leave a Gameboy feeling cheated, this dino-bashing excuse for a shooter sees you playing as a pony-tailed American Indian, transported into a world of dinosaurs and pug-faced aliens who can't shoot straight.

Enemy attacks are generally limited to standing still or getting trapped behind parts of the scenery, and while the dragon flying sections – well, pterodactyl armed with a ray gun – are mildly distracting, the whole affair is little more than an insult to the £1,000 machine sitting on your desk. Although if it's under a PIII 1GHz, you can't even run it. Frankly, it's a joke.

Martin Korda

PCZONE VERDICT

28



Good news, no fillings for you this time, Mr Sanderson.

WALLACE & GROMIT IN PROJECT ZOO

■ £19.99 | Pub: bam! Entertainment | Dev: Frontier | ETA: Out Now

FROM THE makers of *Elite* comes this action/adventure spin-off of the Oscar-winning *Wallace & Gromit* films.

Playing as the fiendishly intelligent dog Gromit, you must bounce, swing and kung fu kick your way around visually impressive levels, solving puzzles as you and sidekick Wallace attempt to foil the devious penguin Feathers McGraw from enslaving the inhabitants of a zoo.

With great voiceovers and animation, zany weapons and film scenes to unlock, fans won't be disappointed – although clumsy controls and unorthodox gamepad set-up options let the side down slightly.

Funny and heart-warming, *Project Zoo* may have its flaws, but it's cracking fun.

Martin Korda

PCZONE VERDICT

71



Crikey Gromit, have you just cut the Gorgonzola?



A kick in the nuts for fans of original action games.

GLADIATOR: SWORD OF VENGEANCE

■ £24.99 | Pub: Acclaim | Dev: Acclaim | ETA: Out Now

GLADIATOR is not a game for the squeamish. Acclaim's gory story of a slave's rise to glory is reminiscent of its erstwhile *Mortal Kombat* series, both in terms of pints of blood spilt and the amount of moves you can pull off.

Some of the 'execution' specials make for particularly disgusting viewing: if watching disembowelled opponents slide off your sword into a bloody heap on the floor is your thing, then come and fill your boots.

Technically, graphically and sonically, *Gladiator* comes across as a solid action game. The only trouble is, you're unlikely to be mesmerised for long. After a while, combat slips into repetitive patterns and with only one character to play as, the boredom factor is accelerated to the point where a single evening of lacerated limbs and oozing innards is plenty, thank you.

Keith Pullin

PCZONE VERDICT

60



Goblin spawns, goblin dies. Goblin spawns, goblin dies. Next!

MAGIC: THE GATHERING BATTLEGROUND

■ £24.99 | Pub: Atari | Dev: Secret Level | ETA: Out Now

THIS GAME is based on the Wizards of the Coast phenomenally successful trading card game, and is crammed full of duellists, spells, monsters and explosions. *M:TGB* is an arcade game along the lines of the *Streetfighter* series. However, instead of kicking and punching, the duellist under your control casts a variety of spells ranging from fireballs to summoning spells. It's certainly not what players of the

original *M:TG* would expect, but it does become oddly compelling – until you slip into a coma after your 50th duel.

The quest mode prolongs the 'excitement' by contriving some kind of story out of the whole affair. However, to be honest it's hard to pinpoint exactly where *M:TGB* is really going, and who's going to play it.

Keith Pullin

PCZONE VERDICT

63

COLD WAR CONFLICTS

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REPLAY

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COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: February

THE WHOLE *Commandos* success is a mystery to some. The insane difficulty for beginners and the repetitive gameplay motif of 'throw cigarettes, knock out the Nazi and hide the body' means that not everybody can appreciate this sequel, the pinnacle of the series and one of the best WWII games ever made.

Don't be fooled into thinking it's an RTS, mind – that way lies disappointment. Instead, *Commandos* creates a genre all of its own, often imitated with poor results, in which vast, intricate maps are filled with puzzles that can only be solved with observation, cunning and perfect timing.

The different skills possessed by each of your commandos (the spy can distract, the thief can climb through windows and so on) gives you plenty of options when

trying to think yourself out of a tricky situation. Your closest ally, though, is the quicksave button: you will fail a dozen times each step of the way before getting it right. But then, that's half the fun.

What really makes this a magnificent title though, is the detail that brings each scenario alive. The scale might be tiny, but the levels feel huge, with Colditz Castle, the Eiffel Tower and other locations brought to life with flair and imagination. These design touches make each assignment exciting, like using bait in tropical waters to attract fish to camouflage you from enemy divers. Forget *Commandos 3* and get this for a fiver.

Mark Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

90



The detail in each map is staggering.



Repetitive and too hard for some, addictive as hell for others.



A Wizard of Oz game is next. Hmm...



Alice finds herself in deep water.

AMERICAN MCGEE'S ALICE

■ £4.99 | Pub: Sold Out | ETA: February

AS WEIRD as Lewis Carroll's classic *Alice* novels, though not quite as wonderful, this is a very dark take on the tales – a kind of Kafka for children.

A fantastic intro movie (perhaps the best and most artful to ever open a game) shows our malnourished heroine locked up in a mental institution attempting to slit her wrists. Of course, the horror angle on Alice's adventures has been explored before, but it's great to see a game trying to do something different. The original is pretty disturbing too, closer to a bad acid trip than an enchanting adventure.

However, where the game fails is in the gameplay stakes,

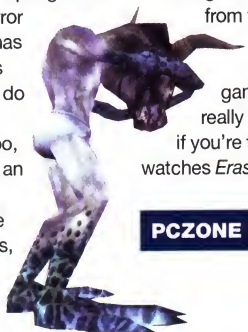
an unforgivable sin considering the stylish presentation and visual splendour. The *Quake III* engine is warped out of recognition to create a highly sinister and surreal landscape, but it all ends up being for nothing as you're forced into a frustrating platform shooter that manages to be dull enough to stop you from wanting to see what weird

and incredible sights await. If you can live with the gameplay though, those sights really are worth seeing, especially if you're the kind of person who watches *Eraserhead* to cheer yourself up.

Mark Hill

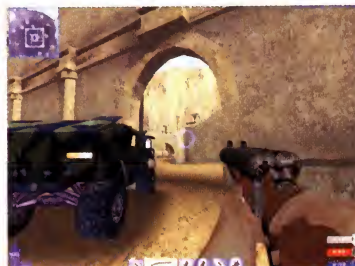
PCZONE VERDICT

70



MOBILE FORCES

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That's not how you hold a shotgun.



"You drive, I'll kill."

RELEASED BY the now defunct Rage, *Mobile Forces* was somewhat overlooked back in the day. Which was a shame, as it's a solid multiplayer first-person shooter, with the added bonus of being able to tear around in a variety of vehicles. In fact, it could tenuously be described as *Counter-Strike* with buggies.

Each level begins in a similar fashion, as you have to select an array of weaponry. However, instead of financial restraints, the limiting factor is bulk, in a simplified *Deus Ex* style.

Once tooled up, you can leap into a jeep or armoured car – either as driver or gunner – and make your way to the action. There, you'll find standard FPS

challenges, such as defending an area for a set time and so on. The maps have a slight fantasy element to them – Wild

West for instance – but are reasonably well designed and provide you with something of a challenge.

However, while the bots are passable (for a multiplayer game that flopped), there isn't a great deal of online action to be found. Clearly, if everybody buys this budget version that will rapidly change – but it does represent something of a gamble. The choice is yours.

Steve Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

65



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FEEDBACK

Will Porter opens up his doors to your praise and quibbles, before beating a response out of our elite team of reviewers

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Feedback is here to offer you a platform to have your say about games we've reviewed over the past three issues. Whether you totally agree or utterly disagree with us, we want to hear from you. And all you have to do to get your views in print is send an email to letters@pczone.co.uk with 'Feedback' in the subject line. Please try and keep your views to less than **100 words**. Anything longer will not be considered or may have to be edited for size.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: RETURN OF THE KING

REVIEWED ISSUE 136
(BY STEVE O' HAGAN),
SCORE: 68%

What we thought

If you're an insatiable consumer of all things *Rings*, then this has all the Tolkien trimmings you could ask for. Ultimately though, it's a shallow affair, a fact that no amount of EA gloss can hide.

What you said

I think your *LOTR: Return Of The King* review was pretty much spot on. It has quite a bit of replay value, what with the different paths for different characters, but I was slightly disappointed that it revealed too much of the plot of the third film a month before it came out.

The action is quite repetitive, although I did like the multiple weapons for characters (like Legolas with the two swords or the bow). The level-up abilities weren't fantastic either, but added another dimension to the gameplay. Perhaps a score in the 70s would have been fair, but you weren't far off at all.

divine_madness

Return Of The King is a real disappointment. It's just a simplistic console hack and slash game of the most basic kind. I think your review was pretty accurate, if a little generous, but I foolishly went and bought the game before I read it. Hype can be a very powerful selling tool.

Dave Bowers

Steve's comment:

Prettiness and authenticity do not a great game make, and much as we all love the *LOTR*



LOTR: Return Of The King is simplistic, but still packs an orc-filled punch.

flicks, you can't help but think Tolkien's epic deserves slightly deeper treatment than this console-basher. Then again, running amok and slaughtering hundreds of bellowing orcs is pretty good fun.

CALL OF DUTY

REVIEWED ISSUE: 136
(BY STEVE O' HAGAN),
SCORE: 94%

What we thought

Call Of Duty throws you into one full-scale engagement after another in an anarchic, brutal, nerve-racking trial by combat.

What you said

If there was ever a game which captures the spirit of a classic Hollywood blockbuster, then *Call Of Duty* is it. You can see

this in many ways, whether it's in the desperate scramble to get behind a burnt-out vehicle to cover yourself against the relentless pounding of mortars and machine gun fire; or when you catch sight of a petrified individual – too shocked and

When I was a boy, I played with WWII Airfix and Action Man. More recently, I really enjoyed *Band Of Brothers*, so the marriage of FPS technology and the current slew of khaki games raised my hopes of revisiting childhood fantasies. Ultimately

“Call Of Duty is packed to the rafters with consistently memorable gaming moments”

RICHARD INGRAM LIKES A BIT OF COMBAT

frightened to even look up and acknowledge you. This game is absolutely packed to the rafters with consistently memorable gaming moments.

Richard Ingram

though, *Call Of Duty* – and *Medal Of Honor* before it – have left me disappointed. Don't get me wrong: the visuals and sound effects are fantastic, creating a thrilling atmosphere, but why can't someone blend this together with the gameplay of *Operation Flashpoint*?

John Leney

Steve's comment:

I agree. *Call Of Duty* pilfers from all the best war movies, while still creating a bunch of its own classic moments. *Operation Flashpoint*, meanwhile, is without doubt a better purveyor of vast freeform gameplay. For all its greatness, *CoD*'s levels are pretty small, but the nature of *Flashpoint*'s gameplay could never really tout any of the awesome Hollywood-style scripted events of *CoD*.

MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

REVIEWED ISSUE: 136 (BY: DAVE WOODS), SCORE: 93%

What we thought

The Fall Of Max Payne is one of the tightest, most thrillingly captivating games of all time, and like all good things in life I didn't want it to end.

What you said

I liked *Max Payne 2*. I played it to death, but was annoyed to see it was just as short as the first one. I thought the eye candy was lovely, and some of the Bullet-Time effects were gobsmacking. The AI stank to high heaven though, as it seemed far too scripted – there was no stealth involved at all. You enter a room, hear the bad guys talking and try sneaking forward a few steps, then, Bam! They know you've arrived, even if you're out of their sight at the time.

Draeger[OWP]

Max Payne 2 is indeed a thing of beauty and just about surpasses the first one. I'm not bothered about short game length – I abandoned *Baldur's Gate II* and *Morrowind* after a while, but quite happily completed *Unreal II* and the *Paynes*. Having said that, I think that *Max Payne 2* needs some sort of gimmick to give the game some longevity, and I'm quite pleased with *Dead Man Walking*. Deathmatch is a great thing, although I would've liked a few more maps, but I'm sure there are mods out there. Overall, I agree with 93%, as *Max Payne 2* has enough varied levels, great AI and nice graphics, not to mention an entertaining story, to easily justify spending £35.

Wounded_Hamster

Dave's comment:

You can't really criticise *Max Payne 2* for not being stealthy enough. *Max* is about shooting people in the face, not sneaking about in the shadows hoping the bad guys don't see you. And yes, it is short, but we still maintain that when a game is this good, size really doesn't matter – as long as you're aware of that fact when you're parting with your cash. And we made that very plain in the review. [W]



Max Payne 2: short, but oh so sweet.



Call Of Duty: World War II gaming at its best.



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WHAT'S A REALITY CHECK?

Reality Check is a monthly feature comparing PC games to their real-life equivalents. Or at least, as close as we can get without risking serious bodily harm.

REALITY CHECK: SCARY GAMES

**Spooks, spirits and things that go smash in the night.
Steve Hill spends the night in a haunted house**

DESPITE what some games would have you think, there are no ghosts, there are no ghouls and there's a perfectly rational explanation for any kind of phenomenon you might encounter. So why am I planning to spend the night in one of Britain's most haunted buildings? To prove exactly that, hopefully, and also to mark the re-release of strategic spook 'em up, *Ghost Master*.

Muncaster Castle in darkest Cumbria is our destination, and it's a motley crew of media scum that gathers at Euston station. We're joined on the train by a Mr Jameson and his friend Stella, and the hours drift by as the scenery becomes greener and the chat turns bluer. Deep into *Withnail* country, it does appear that

we've come on holiday by mistake, particularly when the vagaries of the rail system leave us stranded in the arse end of beyond, aka Whitehaven. A minibus is finally procured, and the final hour of the journey is endured in sinister blackness, with the driver eerily warning: "I wouldn't stay there..."

Ignoring his words, by the time we reach the imposing castle we're simply glad not to be moving. There's no Lurch-style butler to welcome us though; instead, a busy man in a bow tie ushers us into the spacious foyer with a degree of suspicion. Admittedly, some of us are quite well refreshed, not least the photographer – let's call him Shaky. He managed to deck the best part of a bottle

of vodka during the minibus ride, as well as accidentally flicking ash in the eye of a female member of an attendant TV crew.

THERE'S A GHOST IN MY HOUSE

A roaring fire and some mulled wine eases the tension, and we're eventually ushered into the dining room where I'm served Rivers Of Blood, Bloated Corpse and Chilling Moments (otherwise known as tomato soup, chicken breast and ice cream). It's an impressive setting and for no apparent reason, Shaky decides to test the acoustics with a heartfelt rendition of *God Gave Rock 'n' Roll To You*, much to the disapproval of fellow guest Jason Braithwaite, a neuro-psychologist who's been studying ghostly activity at the



REAL

VS



NOT REAL

HOW REAL IS... GHOST MASTER?



You feeling OK? You're looking a bit green...

ON A SCALE OF ONE TO SCARY, IS IT FACT OR FICTION?

In so much as there are ghosts in *Ghost Master*, it's not very real at all. However, the fact that it's not in the least bit scary does make it very similar to Muncaster Castle.

SCORE



castle for 12 years with little success. It momentarily appears that his luck might be in tonight, as the TV woman suddenly claims to have seen "the air move". I'm not buying it, and – somewhat uncharitably – call her a liar. It must have been the ash in her eye.

With dinner over, we're ushered into a room for a lengthy presentation of *Ghost Master*, which is almost certainly as close

not kidding – I've had to move houses if there are interconnecting gridlines."

EMF 2 JFK

Magnetic fields have been cited as an explanation of so-called paranormal activity. A fan of the theory is Jason Braithwaite, who explains his standpoint during a surreal lecture grandly titled 'Where Science Meets The Strange

"I'm used to the ghosts in the game talking to me all night – so I wouldn't be surprised if they turned up again..."

as we're going to come to seeing any ghosts tonight. Even designer Greg Barnett is a sceptic.

"I'm not a believer in paranormal activity," he says. "I'm sure there are things that happen, but I'm sure there are explanations we'll come across as well." Wise words, although slightly tempered when he claims: "I worked on *Ghost Master* for so long that I'm used to the ghosts in the game coming and talking to me all night – so I wouldn't be surprised if they turned up again." Bizarrely, Greg also reveals that he has what doctors call a unique heartbeat. "If I go over certain magnetic fields, it'll go off the planet. I'm

Experience'. Sensing the restlessness in the audience, he whizzes through it at pace, essentially explaining that he's an open-minded sceptic. He thinks that supposed paranormal activity may be caused by electromagnetic fields tickling the surface of the cortex, something he demonstrates with a slide of a human brain with some green bits coloured in. He believes that people do have experiences, but not necessarily that they're caused by the spirits of the souls of the deceased. As he says: "People aren't just lying. There are tangible experiences where people, for want of a better term, shit themselves."



Out of body experience? Out of his mind, more like...



I swear it was this long. Very scary!

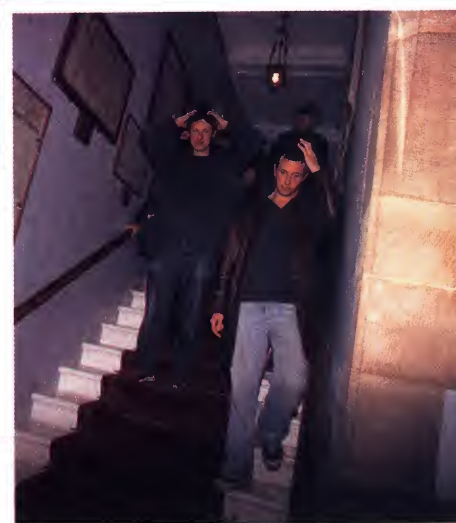
Braithwaite has documented these experiences for a long time, but has yet to scientifically capture any ghostly activity, despite procuring enough money from local businesses to spend six grand on a 'special machine' (which he doesn't have with him). If *The League Of Gentlemen* are ever looking for a new character, he'd be ideal: Jason Braithwaite, unsuccessful ghost hunter.

With the audience gradually turning on him, he struggles to keep it together, and is finally stopped mid-sentence by Shaky, who pipes up: "This is really f**king boring. Is there any way you can zap up JFK? In seven days' time it's the 40th anniversary of when he died – can you zap him up on that screen?"

"You what?" says a stunned Braithwaite, as the front row walk out.

TOMFOOLERY

All that remains is a tour of the castle, led by the industrious Bow Tie. However, before it can begin, a ghostly happening causes chaos. The TV crew's lights have been mysteriously knocked over, causing a stand-up row as the glorified students throw a tantrum. With Bow Tie urging "no more silliness", he eventually gets his tour under way, explaining how the castle is haunted by the ghost of murderer Tom Fool, after whom the phrase tomfoolery was coined. Never exactly reaching the



Damn those low ceilings.

heights of terror, at one stage a remote-controlled plastic spider descends from the ceiling. That was misjudged.

The tour draws to a close in the famous Tapestry Room, where visitors have reported hearing a child crying. Predictably, this hasn't been recorded by Braithwaite, and my offer to lend him my voice-activated dictaphone receives short shrift. Meanwhile, Shaky has crawled under the bed, apparently "looking for devices" after seeing a sign levitate.

All in all, it's a good time to leave, and after stumbling blindly to our quarters, we maintain an all-night vigil. But while we see a lot of spirits, there's no sign of any ghosts. So who smashed the vintage painting? It must have been Tom Fool... [X]

HOW REAL IS... SILENT HILL 3?



Bugs had really let himself go.

SCARED WITLESS OR A HAPPY BUNNY?

It's atmospheric, quite spooky and reasonably compelling. And as such, it has very little in common with the Muncaster Castle ghost experience.

SCORE



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ONLINE ZONE

A NEW HOPE



■ **ONLINE EDITOR:** Paul Presley

▲ So, *Star Wars* then. Big enough to warrant a special themed issue of OZ? Or just a colossal waste of time for adults who won't/can't grow up? Luckily we lean towards the former opinion here at the hollowed-out volcano base we call home (even firm holdout Steve Hill has found himself swayed towards the ways of the Force as you'll see from this month's NeverQuest – page 105).

When we last looked at *Star Wars Galaxies* – at the time of the US launch – we came away with mixed feelings. It was pleasant enough, but from a gaming point of view it hardly set the pulse racing. MMOG launches are rarely pretty, so could the mighty LucasArts/Activision/Sony conglomerate pull enough of the loose threads together by the time the European servers went live? Has enough been added, changed and repaired to the initial mechanics to make it worth you taking a second look? Our review on page 96 brings you the answer.

Meanwhile, the rest of our *Star Wars* Special includes a beginner's guide for those of you already tempted to have a go in George Lucas's virtual playpen, along with a look at some of the best *Star Wars*-related mods, news on the latest in-game happenings and even a quick dabble with the best *Star Wars* FPS of recent years.

However, we mustn't neglect the unconverted out there (heathens!). Reviews of *Savage* and the *Lost Dungeons Of Norrath EQ* expansion pack, an in-depth look at NovaLogic's return to the online fray with *Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising* and all the *Morrowind* downloadables you could ask for round things off this month. Next month we'll have our *Babylon 5* special. Just kidding.

Return Of The Jedi

ANCIENT WARRIORS, PLAYER HOUSING AND SPEEDER BIKES. THE *STAR WARS GALAXIES* UNIVERSE KEEPS GROWING



Let the fat Wookiee win...



Rancors aweigh!

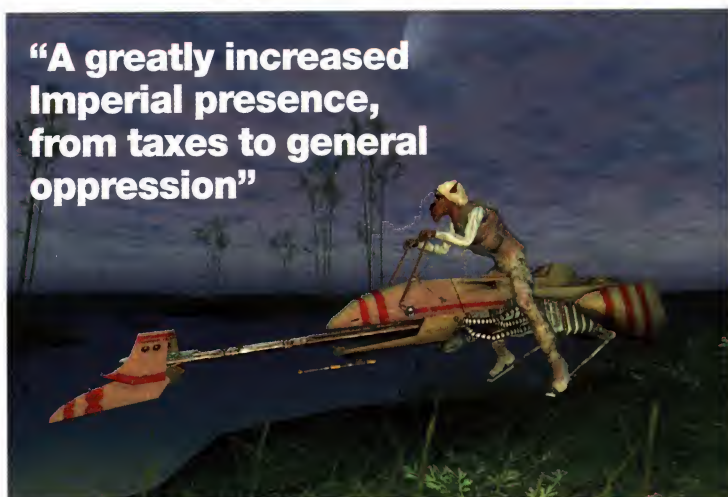
NO-ONE CAN accuse LucasArts of resting on its laurels. Following the biggest launch in MMOG history, it would have been easy for the *Star Wars Galaxies* creators to sit back and count the money. Instead, the team has been busy creating a steady stream of additions, improvements and expansions for the game universe.

The most recent has been the inclusion of player vehicles. From landspeeders to speeder bikes, players can now get about the deserts of Tatooine and the forests of Endor with far greater efficiency than before.

Then there are the Jedi. Recently, a number of players discovered they had qualified to join the world's biggest cult religion. How they did it nobody seems to know – including the Jedi themselves. For all that most players could tell, their names could have been picked out of a giant LucasArts-stamped hat by a top hat-wearing monkey. But there's apparently some sort of logic at work behind the scenes. Whether triggered by a certain combination of advanced classes or just the amount of hours you log on per month, a series of information panels opens up to guide those who come close to unlocking their Force power slots.

In the meantime, non-Jedi players are finding their own ways to add content to the game through the introduction of player

"A greatly increased Imperial presence, from taxes to general oppression"



Scooby-Doo takes on the Empire.

housing. Over the past two months, player communities have quickly spread throughout the different worlds, with local councils being quickly set up and the new Politician class keeping everything in some kind of order. Indications from the development team suggest the storyline is about to take another step in the right direction with a greatly increased Imperial presence in all aspects of everyday life – from taxes to law enforcement to general

dictatorial oppression – thus raising the in-game importance of *Galaxies'* otherwise neglected faction side and making everything a bit more *Star Wars*-like.

Finally the long-awaited 'space' expansion pack is still expected some time next year. How it will fit in with the established ground-based game world remains to be seen, but after a rocky start, it seems as though SWG might finally be the MMOG we've been looking for after all.



"Oh, I feel all tingly..."



The Red Arrows - Landspeeder division.



Bernie Clifton makes a comeback.



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Jump-start your Jedi in SWG



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NEVERQUEST
Wacky Wookiees with Steve Hill

EVENTIDE ON THE EDGE

INDEPENDENT MMOGS TAKE A HIT AS RUBIES OF EVENTIDE FALTERS

IF EVER PROOF were needed that MMOG development is one of the trickiest areas of today's games industry to master, it comes in the form of *Rubies Of Eventide*, a noble, if flawed, independent attempt to take on the might of *EverQuest* et al. Last December, operations at Cyber Warrior, *ROE*'s development studio, ceased due to funding shortages.

During its brief existence, *ROE* had only managed to attract a tiny fraction of the overall MMOG audience, with just over 800 paying customers after some six months of live activity. Reasons cited for the lack of players included dissatisfaction with support for the game, the lack of ability to fund future enhancements and the indication that a majority of *ROE*'s players would be switching to *Horizons* once it launched.

But all is not lost. *ROE* will continue for at least six months, although where funding will come from beyond that is still unclear. Will player community support be enough to see it through? Keep an eye on www.rubiesofeventide.com to see how things pan out.



Will quest for food.



It's a bit quiet around here – a bit too quiet if you ask me.



Do not go gentle into that good night...

WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

WHY PAY TO PLAY WHEN THE INTERWEB PROVIDES FUN FOR FREE?



SNOWFIGHT

(www.robotduck.com)

Oh, the weather outside is frightful. And kids today are spiteful. Aside from its ability to shut down entire transport systems and reduce our stock of elderly people, the only thing you can count on from snow is that young boys will pack it around stones, bits of glass and rusty nails then hurl it at innocent passers-by. Bah, children. They should all be shot. Or forced to do National Service. Or something.

Anyway, with the winter in full swing, it's appropriate that this month's webgame is designed to let you re-create the long-lost childhood pastime of snowball fighting, without having to brave the outside world. It's cold and dark out there and every tree hides a rapist waiting to mug you. Why risk it?

SnowFight is to be found nestling on the well-designed Robotduck site (alongside several other examples of fine web-based gaming, it must be said), and takes the form of a pretty

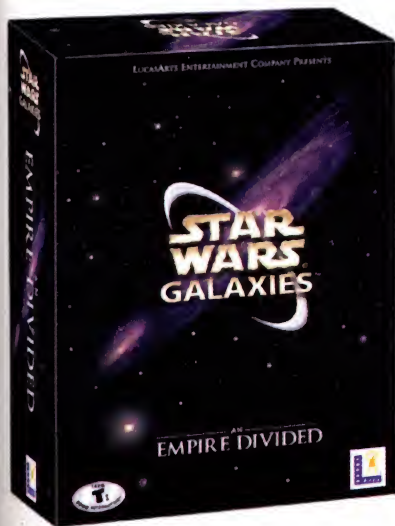


Watch out for sneaky stones.

impressive 3D FPS-style shooter. Over 20 levels, you have the simple job of robbing joy from other children by destroying their snowmen with well-aimed snowballs. Of course they'll try to stop you with missiles of their own, so making good use of the different cover on offer is essential.

We all remember the first time we moistened a policeman's shiny helmet with a well-placed handful. We may even remember the first snowball we threw at a policeman's hat too. Aside from some initially confusing controls (a lack of mouse control will be a hindrance for those raised on a diet of *Quake*, *Doom* et al), *SnowFight* quickly brings the memories flooding back and is certainly preferable to risking frostbite (or, indeed, arrest) for real.

COMPETITION



WIN STAR WARS GALAXIES

FIVE COPIES OF THE SCI-FI SAGA UP FOR GRABS – IT IS YOUR DESTINY TO WIN

With the European servers for *Star Wars Galaxies* filling up quicker than a Hutt at an all-you-can-eat cantina, we've teamed up with the fine folks at Activision to give away five free copies of the MMOG everyone is bursting to get their hands on.

Worth a whopping £34.99 of your galactic credits, it comes with your first 30 days free, letting you explore your hairy fantasies or try your luck with a dancing girl in Jabba's palace before you plump for a full subscription.

To win one of the five copies simply answer the following question: Who provides the voice for Yoda in the Star Wars films?

- A: Brian Blessed
- B: Frank Oz
- C: Joe Pasquale

Send your answer before Thursday February 5 on the back of a postcard or envelope to: *Star Wars Galaxies* Competition, PC ZONE, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1V 0BQ. For full competition terms and conditions, see page 7.

DEVELOPER DIARY



DRAGON EMPIRES

PETER TYSON, Codemasters



Cities are complete, just the dungeons to go.

It's been a while since the last development update so this month I thought I'd give you all the latest news from the studio.

Right now we're testing the stability of some new server code and we've invited a few hundred beta testers to join us. Their job is to be the warm flesh that weighs down our server and connection - they are the grist to the mill, the suicidal Russian charge at the start of *Enemy At The Gates* (or *Call Of Duty* if you prefer), the brave pioneers pushing back the border. They are, in effect, our minions who we want to stress the server as much as possible to see when either it crashes, or they crash, or everything all goes down together.

Once we're happy with the server's stability we'll start turning on the features. This way if

"Our dungeons are the scariest underground spaces I've seen in a game"

(when!) the game breaks, we can be fairly sure of where the break occurred and move in to fix it before we start complicating matters with more bugs and problems. This approach should let us build a stable game quickly as we won't constantly be looking for bugs caused by fixes to other bugs caused by game features. And so on.

As for the rest of development, there has been some great stuff going on in the studio. The economic system is about complete, our quest tools are nearly ready and we have a great number of monsters and beasts ready to unleash on players. We've also seen the release, on our website, of more lore and back story and it has been exciting to see the public response.

The world builders have completed placing all the cities and are now working on dungeons. This is TOP SECRET work so I can't comment any more other than to say they are the most atmospheric and scary underground spaces I've yet seen in a game! Heh, I do like to tease.

Well, I better get back to writing quests. Eighty down, only 400 left to go. Something about a barman, an inn and a rumour I expect... Till next time!

UNREAL II GOES MULTIPLAYER

SPECIAL EDITION RE-RELEASE INCLUDES CLASS-BASED TEAMPLAY



IT'S BEEN a long road, but the wait for a decent multiplayer game of *Unreal II: The Awakening* is finally over. Back in issue 126, we hinted at the possibility of a multiplayer expansion pack and finally, many, many months later, Atari has announced the release of a 'Special Edition' package, complete with a new

expanded multiplayer mode.

The new 'XMP' mode, as it's known, has been developed by Legend Entertainment, working in conjunction with *Unreal* creator Epic Games. Taking the form of a class-based team game akin to *UT2004*'s Onslaught mode, you'll be fighting for control of various energy sources and

deployment points, while seeking out your enemy's artefacts. Victory will go to the team with all four artefacts in its possession. Vehicles will also play a big part in each of the large-scale terrains, from flamethrower tanks to nippy little buggies.

The recent demo, currently nestling snugly on our cover discs (see page 134 for details), has been whetting appetites across the Net, as well as helping to drum up some pre-release hype for *UT2004*'s multiplayer modes, due to hit us in February. The full retail version is available as a free download for existing *Unreal II* owners. Everyone else will have to shell out £39.99 for the boxed version that comes complete with the original single-player *Unreal II* and the *Unreal Editor* toolset.

You can get more information at www.unreal2.com and we'll bring you a full review next month.



Flamethrowers are cool. If you see what I mean.

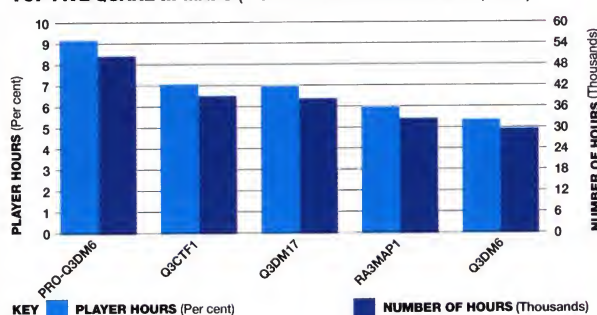
- Publisher: Atari
- Developer: Epic/Legend Entertainment
- ETA: Out Now
- Website: www.unreal2.com

STATZONE

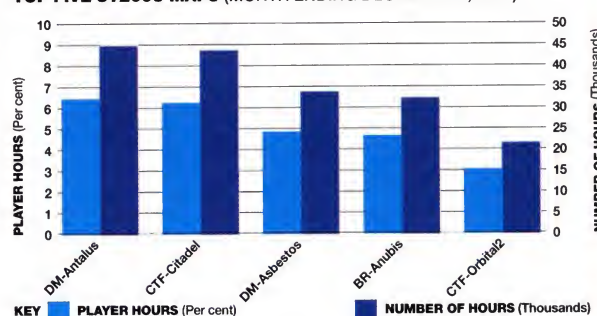
A LOOK AT THE DATA SHAPING YOUR ONLINE WORLD

ALL DATA SUPPLIED BY: ESports.net

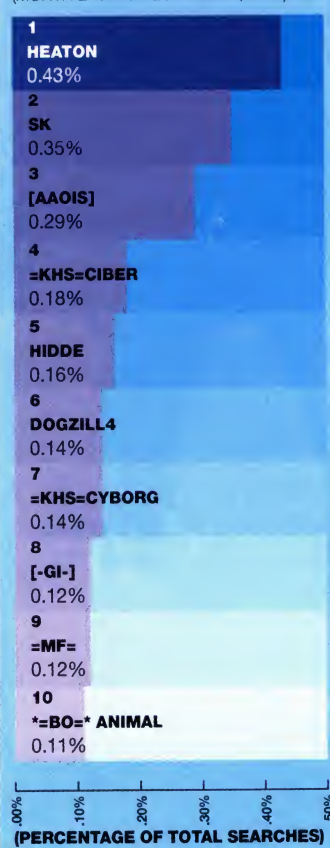
TOP FIVE QUAKE III MAPS (MONTH ENDING DECEMBER 5, 2003)



TOP FIVE UT2003 MAPS (MONTH ENDING DECEMBER 5, 2003)



TOP PLAYER AND CLAN SEARCHES ON CSports.NET (MONTH ENDING DECEMBER 5, 2003)



WELCOME TO MY WORLD...

TAYLOR DAYNES, *Pirates Of The Burning Sea*

HERE'S THE difference: "In most games, your avatar is maybe a couple thousand polygons of some little dweeb in tights jogging around and beating the pants off of sand crabs," says Taylor Daynes, game designer at Flying Lab Software. "In *Pirates Of The Burning Sea* your avatar is anywhere from 60,000 to 350,000 polygons of hulking, death-spewing destruction or a sleek, swift instrument of finely tuned fury."

We're talking ships, of course. Great big sailing ships of yore - replete with cannons, rigging and Russell Crowe-style heroes. *POTBS* takes place in the Caribbean, circa 1720, pitting the naval fleets of the French, English and Spanish against each other, as well as throwing maverick pirate ships into the mix for good measure.

The *POTBS* gameworld is an accurate simulation of the Windward and Leeward island chains, with Danes and his team of artists taking great pains to keep things realistic. "Our ocean looks fantastic," he boasts, "with real pixel-shaded reflections of the sky, ships, and land. The skies are gorgeous and we've put some real artistry into the day/night cycle. The sunsets are stunning, and at night you'll see real stars and real constellations."

Because Flying Lab is a relatively small outfit, it has outsourced a lot of the artwork. "We hired a team of Russian artists to create the most beautifully detailed sailing ships ever seen in a computer game and they really delivered," says Daynes happily. Of course, most of the visual research was undertaken by the team itself. "Oh, the usual," answers Daynes when asked about material. "Great big stacks of books, hours and hours of library tedium, tracking down historical ship plans, and even those 500-piece model ships people put together for years on end. One of our greatest resources is a five-volume work called *The 74-Gun Ship*, which has so much detail about the nature of these ships and life aboard them that it even explains the proper use of leeches in treating sick crew. I think we'll skip that part in the game."

Ultimately though, it's just nice to see a MMOG that doesn't follow the clichéd themes of fantasy goblin-bashing or post-apocalyptic future-worlds. Which is something Daynes wholeheartedly agrees with. "It rules," he says. "There are already too many of those damn orcs and elves lousing up the countryside." [E]

■ **Publisher:** Flying Lab Software
 ■ **Developer:** Flying Lab Software
 ■ **ETA:** Spring 2004
 ■ **Website:** www.flyinglab.com/pirates

"Your avatar is anywhere from 60,000 to 350,000 polygons of hulking, death-spewing destruction"

TAYLOR DAYNES PIRATES OF THE BURNING SEA



"We may have to wait before landing. There's a lot of chopper traffic around here."

Quick, get the brollies up...

JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING

Anthony Holden signs up for a hip replacement and a knee job

WE NEVER know whether to worry or celebrate when a game can be summed up in ten words or less. It certainly makes our jobs easier (or totally redundant, if you like), though a cynic might suggest it points to a certain lack of novelty and/or depth in the game at hand. In the case of *Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising*, however, we're pretty sure it's a cause for celebration, as this is a rather fine-looking entry in a new sub-genre.

To put you out of your misery, the ten words we're talking about are: 'Battlefield 1942 with the Delta Force: Black Hawk Down engine'. There's a bit

more to it than that, but that's the basic starting point. Large-scale maps, real-world team-based warfare, vehicular action over land, air and sea – all online of course, with up to 64 players duking it out simultaneously. There's also a nine-mission single-player campaign, but as with *BF1942*, this serves mainly as a primer for the online games.

Loyal Battlefielders may be reeling in horror at such shameless coattail-riding, but bear with us, as there are some interesting twists on the formula here, some of which aren't half bad.

TERRAINSPOTTING

To get a better idea of what *Joint Ops* is bringing to the table, we recently got hold of the latest code and fired it up on the office LAN. While teams of three and four obviously didn't give us the full experience, we managed to get a good grasp of the direction NovaLogic is taking – and have a surprising number of laughs in the process.

The most immediate difference between *JO* and its Swedish inspiration

is the environment. Set in an imaginary conflict in near-future Indonesia, *JO* pits US and allied Joint Forces (a real-life combination of land, sea and air forces) against some random Indonesian guerillas. As such, the levels take in vast open swamps and rice paddies, dense jungle areas and sprawling tropical islands – along with the occasional shantytown or urban death maze. The designers have done their best to highlight the strategic possibilities and limitations of each different terrain type, so the jungle is dense enough to both hide and get lost in, and the more open areas are dotted with buildings with multiple entrances and vantage points.

Joint Ops seeks to raise the realism stakes in other areas too. There's

full day and night cycling for the serious campaigner, and one or two attempts to reflect the actual practices of warfare. Since Joint Force protocol dictates that you approach dangerous terrain with your gun practically glued to your cheek, the interface lets you peer down the sights of all the guns, even while on the move. Other little touches include a temporary blindness effect if you aim into the sun and some bloody great alligators that attack you in murky waters – sure to give you pause next time you're crossing a swamp.

RAPID ASSAULT

Despite all the nods towards realism, the overriding feeling is of a far more arcade-style experience than *BF1942*



THE DETAILS

PUBLISHER NovaLogic
DEVELOPER NovaLogic
ETA Feb 2004
WEBSITE www.novalogic.com

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's a modern-day *Battlefield 1942*
- Emphasis on realism
- 25 vehicles to pilot
- Full day/night cycle



CARRY ON HAULING

JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING IS DESIGNED FROM THE GROUND UP TO PUSH TEAMWORK

Despite its fast-paced arcade leanings, *Joint Operations* places a lot of emphasis on constructive teamwork. In the bigger maps – some of which stretch up to 64 square kilometres – managing and transporting troops and equipment is vital. You can use Big Chinook and Mi-26 helicopters to airlift vehicles and units into the fray, while air-cushioned landing craft can carry your fighting force to coastal locations. One of the Conquest-style maps we played saw the *Joint Ops* forces advancing on a rebel island from an isolated ocean platform, making this sort of teamwork essential if you want to deploy your ground vehicles.

Joint Ops producer, Joel Taubel, elaborates: "There are several other key features that require teamwork. The mortar team will benefit from a Forward Observer picking targets. The pilot will benefit from the gunners taking out the opposing team. The assault force will benefit from the snipers pinning the enemy down." As is so often the case, it's good to play together.



"Hell of an explosion. Jeff's been blown right off the page."



One sharp turn and the perils of forgetting your seatbelt was readily apparent.

Team Deathmatch and Capture the Flag, and even a manic single flag scramble known as Flagball.

RISK VS REWARD

Other than this basic rethink in the areas of realism and ease of play, there are a number of small tweaks to the blueprint that aren't as immediately apparent. One of our favourites is the scoring system, which despite being a work-in-progress is already far ahead of the clunky points and medals scheme used in *BF1942*. Borrowing from the likes of *Wolfenstein*:

Enemy Territory, the system takes into account individual kills, rewards team-based objectives, and gives bonuses for things like headshots and knife kills. It's not perfect, but it seems to offer suitable rewards for both team players and the inevitable lone wolves.

But however many small changes we identify, the bottom line is *Joint Ops* still feels exactly like *Delta Force* doing *Battlefield 1942*. Whether this is a good thing or not comes down to if you're a *Battlefield* purist or not. In our minds, considering the *Delta Force* games have always worked best in multiplayer, it makes perfect sense, and we have high hopes that *Joint Ops* will learn from *BF1942*'s mistakes and propel the emerging 'online warfare' genre to some exciting new places. [C]

CV

NOVALOGIC

NOVALOGIC

Formed in 1985, NovaLogic is a mid-sized developer/publisher that has carved out a handy niche in military sims, mostly off the back of the *Delta Force* and *Comanche* franchises. Interestingly, a substantial chunk of NovaLogic is owned by EA.

1997 NovaLogic launches NovaWorld, a dedicated online gaming service, which forms an integral part of the company's success in future years.

1998 After years of arcade conversions and whirlybird sims, NovaLogic releases tactical shooter *Delta Force*. Backed up by NovaWorld, it becomes a hit.

2003 *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down*, the fourth in the series, is released to a mixed critical reception. Another hit with the fans, *BHD* boasts a versatile 3D engine that later forms the backbone of *Joint Ops*.

– not surprising if you've ever played a *Delta Force* game before. Of the 25 or so real-world vehicles in the game (taking in zodiacs, jeeps, trucks, choppers, amphibious APCs, huge LCAC hovercraft and loads more), none is difficult to pilot. You can enter a boat simply by swimming underneath it and pressing the action key, and you can change player class (your basic sniper/support/grunt setup) simply by stepping into a supply truck and picking up a new weapon.

Even the gameplay modes have a slightly arcade tone to them. While there's an objective-based assault mode similar to *BF1942*'s Conquest, NovaLogic is hanging on to the likes of

"Joint Force protocol dictates that you approach dangerous terrain with your gun practically glued to your cheek"

PCZONE READERS' CHALLENGE

WIN
BIG
PRIZES!!

Nab them, bag them, grab them, frag them...

WE CAN HEAR the screams of pain, pleasure and persecution from here. Round Two is underway. With *Halo* and *Counter-Strike* keeping the team players busy, and *Quake III Arena* keeping the solo fraggers entertained, it's time to announce the winners of Round One!

Of the three competitions in Round One, easily the most active was the *Unreal Tournament 2003* one-on-one ladder. After much to-ing and fro-ing, the eventual victor was... (drum roll please)... Zimmy!

The team games were no less brutal, but the eventual winners of both ladders began to make themselves known early on. The winning clan in the *Day Of Defeat* ladder was :bA:, led by the venerable Angryratman!

Finally the *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* ladder came down to a two-horse race between the runners-up (the GaY Clan) and the ultimate victors... [CoC], led by [CoC]_OZ!

Each of the winners receives a year's subscription to *PC ZONE*, the game or games of their choice and, most importantly, automatic entry into our Grand LAN Final later this year.

If you want to have a shot at seeing your own name in lights (as it were), it's not too late to enter Round Two and get fragging. Head over to

www.pczone.jolt.co.uk, sign yourself or your five-man team up for one of the three ladders and fight your way to fortune and glory.

Remember, the ladders work in much the same way as any gaming ladder. To progress to the top you need to challenge (and beat) the teams above you.

Challenges are up to you to issue. There's no set time or date for them to take place – that's entirely up to you

and your opponent to arrange. Players who remain inactive for long periods will be automatically dropped several places, so once you register, make sure you keep playing if you want to have a shot at winning.

Also, once you play a match, make sure you register the result with the Jolt admins or you'll have fought in vain.

Round Two began on December 15 and runs until March 12. Players are free to join the ladder at any time before or after that date, but matches played outside of those times won't be counted.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to post them on the ladder forums at the Jolt website and we'll do our best to sort things out.

Good luck one and all!

SIGN UP AT
www.pczone.jolt.co.uk
TODAY!

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www.gainward.com

HOSTED BY

jolt
online gaming



HALO

Games run from December 15 – March 12

- Teams of five players each
- The map is Battle Creek
- Game type is Standard CTF
- First team to three points wins the match
- All standard map rules and weapons apply

COUNTER-STRIKE

Games run from December 15 – March 12

- Teams of five players each
- The map is De_Dust
- First team to five points wins the match
- Matches last one round only (team sides decided in advance)
- All standard map rules and weapons apply

QUAKE III ARENA

Games run from December 15 – March 12

- Game type is one-on-one deathmatch
- The map is Q3DM17
- First to ten kills wins the match
- All standard map rules and weapons apply

FIGHTCLUB

FIRST RULE OF FIGHT CLUB: PC ZONE OWNZ JØØ
FIGHT CLUB MODERATORS: METALFACE & REX MUNDI

FIRST THE bad news. At the time of writing we were still without Internet gaming access at Zone Towers. Apparently someone spilt their extra-strength gingerbread latte on the cables and fried the whole system. However, even as I type these words I can see a large, bearded chap with excessive bum cleavage scrabbling about under a desk putting things right. The **PC ZONE** Fighting Whippets will return, stronger than ever, ready for action in the only way we know how! Fear us (cough).

■ Now the good news. Despite our absence, our star moderators, Metalface and

moped about half-heartedly, with precious little skill in sight... OK, the event was actually perhaps one of the best fought in Fight Club history, a fact that can only be put down to our inept presence not fouling up everyone else's noble efforts.

A host of players made their names into our Star Fraggers book, including RAVENCDF, <<Babas>>, Flesh N Bone K, InCision, Zed, :o and Gowerlypuff. Well done folks, and apologies again for our absence. We'll be there January 8 for *Battlefield 1942*. Meanwhile you can witness some of the *W:ET* action below.

COME & HAVE A GO!
www.zonegames.co.uk
 for all the info

UPCOMING FIGHT CLUBS

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 5

6.30pm – 9.00pm

Halo

THURSDAY MARCH 4

6.30pm – 9.00pm

Call Of Duty

THURSDAY APRIL 8

6.30pm – 9.00pm

Unreal II Expanded Multiplayer

Rex Mundi, kept things ticking over in fine style, hosting our December *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* event. Apparently our absence was sorely missed and as a result everyone just



Storming the beaches.



Fight Club – the place to be.

LAN ROVER

STEVE 'SCALPER' RANDALL AVOIDS THE LAN MINES

First up are the people of WestLAN who are hosting a LAN that will finish on the very day of my birthday. It's being held near Exeter (Lymptone), costs around £15 and lasts three days – from 7pm on February 6 to 5pm on February 8 (my birthday). You can find more details of how to book at www.westlan.co.uk.

■ The vampire event of the month is being held a week before my birthday at the secret nuclear bunker in Kelvedon Hatch, Brentwood, Essex from January 30 to February 1 and costs £30. The price includes use of one of the 25 bunk beds and the hot showers. More information is available from www.gamesmeet.net.

■ The month before my birthday (*You may have mentioned this already – Ed*), the LanSE team is holding an event in High Wycombe. It costs £15 to get into the whole thing, which runs from January 9-11. It takes place in its all-new hall, which comes complete with a fridge and

shower. You can find out everything you need to at www.lanse.co.uk.

■ Fragurself (www.fragurself.co.uk) is hosting a £30 two-day event on January 24-25 for 60 gamers in Whitefield, Manchester. It has loads of sponsors, so if you're good, expect loads of prizes!

■ Let's finish with Generator II (www.lan.gamedomain.net) in Bristol from February 6-8 for 32 players. The entrance fee is £25 with a dual backbone switched network of 1000Mb, some free food and drink and prizes too. It also happens to finish on my birthday (*OK, we get it – Ed*).

■ That's me done for the month, now I have to go and organise a party of my own. I can't remember what it was for, though. If you have any ideas, find me in the forum at www.ggfan.co.uk.

■ If you're organising an event, let me know with two months notice at scalper@ggfan.co.uk. Till next month, Scalper out.

GUILDHALL



FEELING LOST AND ALONE?

Looking for that special group of someones to share your love of group gaming? Wanna, to be blunt, be in my gang? Check out some of the guilds and clans currently recruiting members and soon you too could find happiness, togetherness and a sense of belonging.

CLAN (RSUK)* Red Storm UK

CONTACT admin@redstormuk.com

WEBSITE www.redstormuk.com

MAIN GAMES *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault* and the *Spearhead* and *Breakthrough* expansions, *Call Of Duty*
DETAILS Red Storm UK is a clan with experience. We compete in the ClanPlanet Anti-Cheat ladders and with season four fast approaching we are looking to recruit. Do you have what it takes? Want to be part of our revolution? Then join us, comrade, and fight for the motherland!

CLAN *GeRm* Global Elite Rampage Masters

CONTACT germ.klok@ntlworld.com

WEBSITE www.germ-warfare.tk

MAIN GAMES *Unreal Tournament 2003*

DETAILS We are a friendly clan playing *UT2K3* Instagib Capture The Flag. Formed in early 2003, we are slowly building a squad of fun players who play the game for enjoyment. We are looking for team members in all areas, but mainly people who want to have fun playing in a clan.

CLAN Team Friction *F

CONTACT steve7527@lycos.co.uk

WEBSITE www.friction1942.net

MAIN GAMES *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down*, *Battlefield 1942*

DETAILS Team Friction is a group of mature (physically, if not mentally) gamers who know how to enjoy themselves without taking life too seriously. At Friction the most important quality is the right attitude of the members and their support and involvement in the squad. Sound good? See you soon then!

CLAN Tonto Clan

CONTACT Tonto_SNR

WEBSITE www.tontoclan1.com

MAIN GAMES *Age Of Empires II: The Age Of Kings*, *Cossacks*, *WarCraft III*, *Battlefield 1942*

DETAILS Our clan has been going since 2000 now through highs and lows, but is still regarded as a great RTS clan to be in. We always welcome new members and all that we ask is that you be willing to fit into the community and have a great attitude! Anyone wishing to join the clan should contact me, Tonto_SNR, at the website.

CLAN International Frag Force

CONTACT rushty@fragforce.co.uk

WEBSITE www.fragforce.co.uk

MAIN GAMES *Call Of Duty*, *Battlefield 1942*, *Desert Combat*, *Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield*, *Soldier Of Fortune*
DETAILS IFF is a well established and respected clan and it is looking for members for all of the above games. Any skill level. You must be able to play as a team member, have a friendly attitude and enjoy the game, not just winning.

CLAN Kings Of Territory (KoT)

CONTACT Riot, via the website

WEBSITE www.k-o-t.tk

MAIN GAME *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory*

DETAILS KoT is an expanding clan, and based on two fundamental teachings: teamwork and trust. We are in the *Enemy Territory* Stopwatch UK ladder. We are always looking for new friendly people that get along with other members. KoT looks forward to seeing you soon!

To feature in Guildhall simply send your details and no more than 50 words describing your group to online.zone@pczone.co.uk (subject line: GUILDHALL) or to Guildhall, **PC ZONE**, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ.

STAR WARS GALAXIES: AN EMPIRE DIVIDED

■ £34.99 | Pub: Activision | Dev: Sony Online Entertainment
| ETA: Out Now | starwarsgalaxies.station.sony.com

REQUIRES PIII 933, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card, 56K modem
DESIRES P4 2GHz, 512MB, 128MB 3D card, broadband connection

The European servers are live. The game's updated. **Paul Presley** explores the new Naboo...



Yes, I'm a ginger Jedi. What of it?



Just don't mention Boba Fett or you'll upset him.

CONFESSION time.

I always thought the stormtroopers in *Star Wars* were robots. Seriously. I simply imagined Luke and Han spent half an hour or so stripping all

the wires out of the two they lured into the Falcon in Episode IV, before putting on their outer casings. I just figured Obi-Wan was manipulating their programming with the Jedi mind trick on Tatooine. And to be honest, I still do. Clones? Not for me, suckers.

You see, that was always the beauty of the *Star Wars* universe prior to *The Phantom Menace* – it belonged to us. We made up the rules of the universe as we wanted them to be. But with all this clone rubbish and midichlorian bullshit, Lucas has basically raped our childhoods, taken our imaginations and stamped his great big boot of authorisation all over them. In



Ah, those imperial cities. Lovely.



Call me paranoid, but I think we're being watched.

the process, he's milked every last drop of credibility from his reputation by merchandising anything not bolted down. And then, just to top it all off like a giant turd on the mountain of our broken dreams, he created Jar Jar Binks.

FEEL THE FORCE

The potential that lay behind *Star Wars Galaxies*, therefore, was always going to outweigh any realistic implementation of its gameplay. This was, after all, a chance for us to put a comforting arm around the sobbing child in our minds, to reshape *Star Wars* the way we

wanted it. Sure, there'd be rules to follow – it's a game, after all. But we could finally put the nightmare of *Episodes I, II & III* behind us. And yes, we know *Episode III* has yet to appear, but honestly, with the track record so far... Unfortunately, we saw the American launch of the game six months or so ago, and it confirmed our worst fears. Far from being set free, the sobbing child was kicked in the ribs and our spirits sank further still.

The biggest problem for most was simply that, aside from the outer casings, this had as much to do with the fictional universe we still hopefully clung



INPERSPECTIVE

PLANETSIDESIDE

Reviewed Issue 131, Score 82%

If you really want to take part in a galactic online war, *PlanetSide's* your man. If nothing else, it proves FPS game mechanics can work in a MMOG setting.

EVE ONLINE

Reviewed Issue 130, Score 88%

If you really want the space battles of *Star Wars*, you won't find them here. This is a slow-paced affair, but no less enjoyable for it.



Fame! I'm gonna live forever...



Seriously dude, lose the hat.



Chewie, no! Stop dragging your arse along the floor!



"Honest, I didn't shoot at Han first. He fired at me!"

to as Luke and Han did to those stormtroopers. Sure, there was Tatooine and there were the wookiees and there was that funny blue fella with the elephant nose that plays the piano. But seriously, what was with all this campsite crafting and butterfly hunting and resource surveying hogwash? Where were all the epic struggles against the Empire, the rescuing of

princesses from Death Stars and where, for the love of Michael Aspel, were the X-Wings? This was *Star Wars*, remember?

HERE'S THE RUB

Of course, what LucasArts/Sony had done was take the easy way out. Rather than radically rethink the entire MMOG ethos in order to create a compelling online experience for Jedi wannabes everywhere, they instead took the existing, profitable, *EverQuest* model and slapped a *Star Wars* skin on top. Some reworking of the game rules here and there, although nothing that hasn't been seen anywhere else, and a better graphics engine, and that's your lot. Off you go, grinding out those levels through the same old action repetition, the occasional nod towards the films your only reward.

So it's rubbish, then? Well, that's the odd part. No, it isn't. In

no sense can you describe *Star Wars Galaxies* as a rubbish MMOG. You can criticise it all you want for not being the grand *Star Wars* MMOG experience we all wanted it to be. However, if you push all the licensed baggage to one side and just view it as a generic sci-fi themed RPG, there's a lot to admire.

Most of the problems associated with the US launch have been eradicated and the two European servers are the places to be if you want a friendly, social experience. Within my first two hours in

"The more it tries to stay faithful to *Star Wars*, the less appealing SWG is going to be"

SWG, I'd been taught every language in the game and a host of advanced skills by helpful players, something encouraged by the very competent skill system at work. You're rewarded for doing just about anything, including helping others.

It's still mired in the same basic set-up as every other MMOG – most notably *EverQuest* as you'd expect being from Sony. And with the recent additions to the game –

player housing, mounts, vehicles and the no-longer mythical Jedi, it's starting to carve out an identity of its own. Indeed, player-created towns and villages add colour and character that wouldn't have been possible if LucasArts had

insisted that the universe stays true to the *Star Wars* back-story.

HERE'S THE RUB

In fact, that's perhaps the biggest lesson that LucasArts has had to learn – and thankfully it appears not to have dropped the ball this time. The more it tries to stay faithful to *Star Wars*, the less appealing it's going to be because, despite our childhood dreams, the truth is that as an entity, *Star Wars* isn't

EMPIRE BUILDING

CHOOSE YOUR FACTION WISELY YOUNG PADWAN

The PvP side of SWG centres around the Galactic Civil War. You're free to join with either side (rebels or imperials) and run secret missions that increase your standing. Should you come across any players of opposing factions in the meantime, feel free to blast them away.

Nice idea, except for one small problem. Almost everyone you meet is allied with the rebels. Who wants to toady around for stormtroopers after all, when you can follow the ways of the force and earn yourself a lightsaber?



"Oo, a trooper's lot is not a happy lot..."

suited to persistent world gameplay. It's a saga that needs structured storylines with beginnings, middles and ends.

As George Lucas continues to pollute the worlds he created, the best thing *Star Wars Galaxies* can do is continue to grow apart from the increasingly flawed universe it came from and find its own destiny in the stars. [C]

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Not actually a bad MMOG
- ✓ Good skill tree system
- ✓ Friendly, helpful players
- ✓ Continuing to grow
- ✗ Never going to be the *Star Wars* experience we all wanted
- ✗ Very processor-hungry

73

Set it free LucasArts, and watch it grow



Work had dried up since *Frogger*, but a job's a job.



Scary, but his depth perception is terrible.

EVERQUEST: LOST DUNGEONS OF NORRATH

■ £19.99 | Dev: Sony Online Entertainment | Pub: Ubisoft | ETA: Out Now | www.lostdungeonsnorrath.com

REQUIRES P3 500MHz, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card, 56K Modem, full copy of *EverQuest* **DESIRES** If you're running EQ well enough, this will also run OK

Static dungeons are no more. Chris Anderson gets claustrophobia in Sony's new expansion



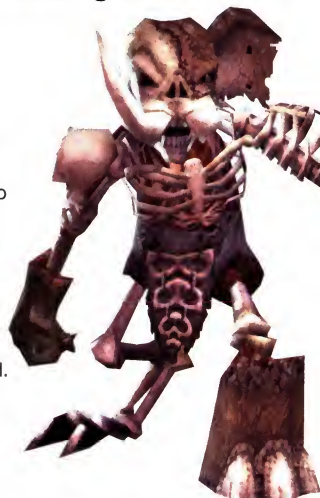
THIS IS an *EverQuest* expansion with a difference. If you were expecting the usual blend of new landmasses and endless new features that come with every expansion Sony has released to date, you'll be surprised to find neither are on offer. However, you won't be disappointed, as thanks to *Lost Dungeons Of Norrath*, your *EverQuest* hunting habits are about to change forever.

LDON introduces 48 new dungeons to the world (count 'em), but rather than open new

static dungeons for the ever-eager public, Sony has introduced a brand new adventure system. Teams of three players or more can now enter a dungeon spawned specifically for them, tailored to their groups' levels, strengths and classes, and can battle to complete it within a set time limit for loot and experience.

ANARCHY IN THE EQ

If this sounds familiar, it should. *Anarchy Online* had a mission system right from day one that enabled players to enter dungeons either alone or in teams, each spawned for the players' own purposes. *LDON* is no different, though it has to be said the excellent dungeon design on display here exposes *Anarchy Online*'s mission areas to be as bland and unimaginative as many *AO*



veterans discovered them to be. Score one point for Sony.

This all sounds wonderful in theory, and luckily it proves to be the case in the game. It's actually a lot more fun than going through the standard level grind,

and of course, you can choose to go on adventures with friends or guildmates instead of having to risk running around a dungeon with a random group of witless losers who seem determined to get you killed through their stupidity (a problem any EQ veteran will have come up against before now).

Guilds in particular will find *LDON* a real boost. Organising raids has never been easier, and without the interruption of outsiders, effective teamwork is encouraged to a far greater level than ever before.

POINTS MAKE PRIZES

Then there are the adventure points. Used to buy new items at merchants, the more points you accumulate, the better the selection on offer. Existing

equipment can be upgraded too, with new augmentations able to raise vital stats without you having to upgrade all your items.

With *LDON*, Sony has again taken another developer's idea and made it much better. It's not perfect – finding a non-guild group to stay together till the end of a dungeon can often be difficult, and finding people capable of playing as a team so you can survive an endless onslaught is difficult too. There's also noticeable lag on display, particularly on large raids. But in the main, *LDON* is an excellent addition that extends the EQ lifespan once more. Until *EverQuest 2*, at any rate. **PC**

INPERSPECTIVE

ANARCHY ONLINE V1.5

Reviewed Issue 114, Score 82%
Anarchy Online introduced the DIY dungeon idea. *Lost Dungeons Of Norrath* does it better. No surprise there then.

ASHERON'S CALL 2

Reviewed Issue 126, Score 70%
Recently re-vitalised, AC2 is a good alternative if you shriek when you see EQ's passé graphics.



Truly, he is the lord of the dance.



Someone needs a good meal.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Excellent dungeon design
- ✓ Something for casual players at last
- ✓ Upgrade your items with ease
- ✗ The lag monster returneth
- ✗ Open exploration is a thing of the past
- ✗ Dungeons can get repetitive over time

80

Another winner from Sony



Purple haze, growing in my brain.



Ally McBeal's let herself go a bit.

SAVAGE: THE BATTLE FOR NEWERTH

■ Price: £29.99 | Developer: S2 Games | Publisher: Digital Jesters | ETA: February | www.s2games.com

REQUIRES PIII 800MHz, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D card, Broadband connection DESIRES P4 1.5GHz, 256MB RAM, 128MB 3D card, Broadband connection



Keith Pullin channels his rage and finds the beast within

STRANGE AS it may seem, I've been pretty bored online recently. I seem to have this knack of choosing games that nobody else wants to play. Drifting through the uninhabited servers, I often wonder what it's like to be surrounded by enthusiastic, eager team-mates, all willing me on as I scythe my way through extraterrestrial pie. At least, that's what it used to be like – before *Savage*.

Savage is social gaming personified. Two opposing teams of up to 32 players (one comprising of humans and the other beasts) each construct a base, research loads of weapons and stalk each other around fantastically designed levels, from mountains to swamps.

Team commanders are the players who generally have the most responsibility, insofar as they're the ones who decide

where to build base structures and what the overall strategy should be. For them, the game is played from an overhead RTS viewpoint. For other team members, *Savage* is a straightforward action game. And although technically you're a mere pawn, you never feel as though you *have* to do anything.

DO WHAT YOU LIKE
Orders from the top are more like suggestions; if you want to help construct a watchtower on the edge of your team's territory then fine – go ahead and do it. If, on the other hand you just want to run around hacking the



You have to level all enemy structures before your team wins.

indigenous wildlife to pieces, you can do that too. Nobody forces you to do anything and it's great to know you can explore your surroundings and not get the boot for doing so.

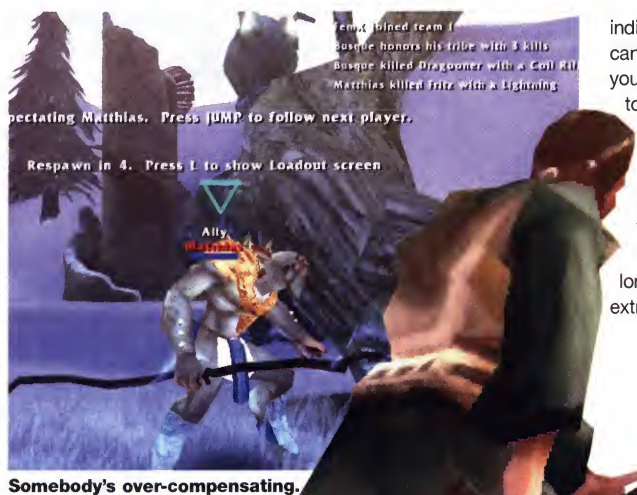
ETERNAL FLAME

The thing about exploring is that you usually stay alive longer too. Even when you take extraordinary care, you'll probably only last a couple of minutes in battle. Your existence is part of a never-ending

production line of disposable warriors, who are constantly killed and respawned. When you do kill an enemy, the corpse drops cash so you can buy new upgrades at your base – everything from plasma guns to stronger avatars. Commanders can even summon giant monsters to do a Godzilla-style demolition job on a rival HQ. The only downside is the close combat, which basically comprises of running, jumping and slashing with sword or pincer. A few more combos or melee weapons wouldn't have gone amiss. OK, it may all be utterly brainless, but if you're after a straightforward pick up and play, gung-ho shooter with an RTS sideline, you won't find many better – or friendlier. **PC2**

INPERSPECTIVE

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO
Reviewed Issue 95, Score 85%
Slightly more complex and certainly not as much fun. Lots of naked ladies, mind...
WARCRAFT III: REIGN OF CHAOS
Reviewed Issue 119, Score 85%
A proper online RTS for those who want their units to do what they're asked to do.



Somebody's over-compensating.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Amazingly easy to sign up and get going
- ✓ Friendly, well populated servers
- ✓ Excellent map design
- ✓ Fantastic range of weapons and upgrades
- ✗ Very simplistic game design
- ✗ Limited in close combat

80

Savage glee

GALACTIC CONQUEST V0.1D

SIZE 294MB (+27MB for patches) **REQUIRES** Full version of Battlefield 1942

www.galactic-conquest.net

Tony Lamb mounts his Tauntaun and heads for Hoth

TOTAL CONVERSION



It's just a fancy cargo ship really.



"Please be Chewbacca, please be Chewbacca..."

STAR WARS mods start here: *Galactic Conquest* is fun with a capital F. As you'd expect from a *Battlefield 1942* mod, it's a team-based scrap – between plucky Rebel fighters and the oppressive Imperial stormtroopers, and it's very true to its *Star Wars* inspiration.

OK, there might only be one map – the Hoth ice-planet battle in this case – but with usable vehicles and a good variety of weapons on both sides it's a great way to relive the excitement of *The Empire Strikes Back*.

Rebels get to choose between fixed gun

emplacements, the ubiquitous snowspeeders and a lovingly re-created *Millennium Falcon* (which might be the coolest spaceship in the universe, but is still a bitch to get out of the hangar), while the Imperial forces have TIE fighters, TIE bombers and AT-ST armoured walkers.

Unfortunately, Hoth is a battle that needs a lot of players, and GC doesn't yet have sufficient online support. The bots simply aren't designed for what is at heart a multiplayer-only mod. Hopefully this is a temporary hitch as once exposure time for GC grows, it should really take

off. With the extra vehicles and maps expected for version 0.2, it could be a real winner.

PCZONE VERDICT **79**

The Force could be strong with this one

TROOPERS: DAWN OF DESTINY V2.1

SIZE 217MB **REQUIRES** Full version of Unreal Tournament 2003

www.ut2003troopers.com

Tony Lamb gets force-ful

TOTAL CONVERSION

MY BEING born in the '60s was a mixed blessing. Bad, because grey hair is now a fact of life, but good, because I saw *Star Wars* in the cinema when it was first released. It was 1977, I was nine and it was magical. Just me, popcorn, Coca-Cola and a 20ft Princess Leia on the silver screen. Heaven.

Star Wars-related games have been a mixed bunch, having to compete with LucasArts' film wizardry, multi-million dollar budgets and cinemagoers inflated ideas of what a game can achieve. *UT2003 Troopers* is one of a rash of *Star Wars*-inspired mods that have taken advantage of the built-in flexibility of modern FPS games. For a demo release it's not bad, offering three very

different maps, Imperial and Rebel skins, authentic sounds, no less than three game modes (Clean Sweep, Deathmatch and Conquest) and some very neat-looking vehicles.

There are of course limitations – you can't use any of the vehicles; animations are rather wooden; and the frequent audio comments from fellow players are nearly as annoying as Jar Jar Binks. Even more worrying is the fact that the Rebels are hopelessly outgunned and the Imperial weaponry appears to have a much faster rate of fire. Even moron-level enemy bots are frighteningly accurate.

Don't be put off, though. There's some hard work tied-up in this mod, with more to follow. It has potential and it's worth

watching for more maps and the usable vehicles that will arrive at a later date.

PCZONE VERDICT **69**

A promising student



He's lost more than Artoo.



Behind you, mate.



Wedge? Biggs? Oh, I'll just call you Extra #34.

ULTIMATE SURVIVAL V1.45

TOTAL CONVERSION



SIZE 170MB **REQUIRES** Full version of Unreal Tournament 2003
www.planetunreal.com/ums

Tony Lamb does it with luminous balls

I LIKE paintball. Not getting shot of course – that hurts like stink – but the satisfaction of hearing the loud smack and howl of pain that means your pellet has struck home. But how

do you make this into a satisfying game when there can't be any gibs, beheadings or slow deaths in vats of acid? Tricky.

Actually, *Ultimate Survival* works very well, and what it lacks in gore it makes up for in required skill. Paintballs travel slowly, so you have to allow for loft and target movement when aiming from a distance. It takes practice, and the wise player who keeps moving is unlikely to get picked off at range – it's the short distance in-ye-face splat you have to watch out for.

At this stage in its development, *UMS* uses standard skins and only one type of marker (gun). You can't yet buy any accessories, customise your weapon or choose one type of marker over another. But it's still a lot of fun, and while you can't really frag anyone, the adrenalin level is almost as high. The



Trip to B&Q = unlimited ammo.

maps are varied in style and include death-houses, scrap yards, icy wastelands and jungles. A lot of work has obviously gone into these and it's nice to see a mod released with plenty of maps from day one.

Admittedly, there's already a *Half-Life* paintball mod out there that's further developed, but the *Unreal* engine produces a harder-edged interpretation which is just as much fun.

PCZONE VERDICT 79

Hits the target (with paint)



Cheating surely? He's already been hit twice.



"He slimed me."

JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY



"Bloody fur – always giving me static shocks."

ANYONE with an ounce of common sense can see just how good the single player aspect of *Jedi Academy* is. And should they even dare to disagree, a quick thrashing with birches will see them right. But multiplayer *Jedi Academy*, well now, that's a different kettle of Jaws.

It certainly has a lot to recommend, don't get me

wrong. In fact the one-on-one duels are pretty absorbing once you get the hang of the tricky light saber controls. In fact they've caught on to such an extent that people even start each fight with a respectful bow to their opponents before the sparks fly. Very cool.

The other game mode – Siege – isn't quite so hot. Ostensibly it's a valid enough

concept: two teams have to attack or defend objectives before the time runs out. The classes offer some interesting weapons to play with, and any game that lets you ride around on speeder bikes has some merit. But it falls down because it requires large numbers to work, which means, with only 16 players supported at max, its potential is never really fulfilled.

Better are the standard online modes. CTF is a laugh: the inclusion of Force powers helps provide some variety from other games with similar modes (Force-pushing an opponent away from your flag and over the side is particularly satisfying).

It's nice to see Raven has tried to pay more than lip service to the multiplayer game, and for that alone it's worth a look. But

the established shooters won't be unduly worried by anything on offer here.

PCZONE VERDICT

FULL REVIEW ISSUE 133 **69**

MULTIPLAYER SCORE 77

More 'promising apprentice' than Jedi

£39.99 | Pub: Activision | Dev: Raven Games | ETA: Out Now
www.lucasarts.com/products/jediacademy | Players: 2-16

REQUIRES PIII 450MHz, 128MB RAM, 32MB video card, 56k modem
DESIRES P4 1GHz, 256MB RAM, 64MB video card, broadband connection

He may prefer a blaster to an ancient weapon, but **Paul Presley** knows a good fight when he sees one



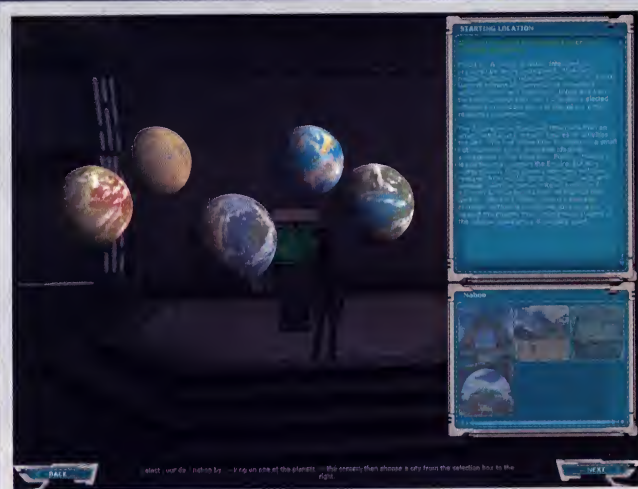
"Cross this line, you die."



Multi-saber duels are manic.

Getting started in... STAR WARS GALAXIES AN EMPIRE DIVIDED

The force is strong in this one, but take heart as *Les Ellis* explains how you can avoid the pitfalls as you start on the road to becoming a Jedi...



HOME FROM HOME

1 Fancy dying seconds after you leave the city? Didn't think so. Choose the right place to start. Planets like Naboo, Corellia and Tatooine are safer for beginners, as the high level creatures are further away from the cities and there are always plenty of other players around to help. Choose somewhere like Endor and you're going to die quickly, so try and resist the urge to go Ewok hunting. Once you begin the game, press CTRL+M to get the map and find the cloning terminal, spend credits to clone and insure so you won't lose anything when you die.



FIND YOUR RANGE

2 Assuming you want to use weapons, you'll have to find the ideal range. First, equip your weapon and get close to a creature. You should notice a small plus or minus number next to the target: move back and forward and this changes. When it's at its maximum, you've found the ideal range for the weapon you're using. Now go prone and unleash hell. If the range is right, your fight won't last as long and you'll take less damage. If the creature attacks, kneel or stand rather than stay prone to finish it off.

A CLASS OF YOUR OWN

3 Mixing and matching your starting classes is vital. If you want to fight, you'll need to be able to scout, hunt and heal, for example. While it's easy to switch between classes, knowing what you want to do at the beginning saves time. If you start as a Novice Marksman, gain Novice Medic and Novice Scout in your starting city and you'll blast through all these classes quicker. This is because your character can heal himself after a battle, so you don't have to return to town. You can also make your own campsites when out in the field.



A SENSE OF GUILD

4 Soling in the game is fun, but it limits what you can hunt. As soon as you can, join a guild. You get access to cheaper items, plenty of people on hand to help if you get confused and more people on hand to join to go off on massive hunts where the XP points start to fly. Play regularly with a guild and you'll find useful items get handed down from player to player too, meaning you can get armour or enhanced weapons earlier in the game. The more you play as a team, the more you'll discover.

BEASTIE BOY

5 You'll notice when you start doing missions that there's a lot of running around. Not so bad when you're in a city, but out in the country it gets pretty dull. Get yourself a mount. Not only can you run faster with one of these, but when you dismount and fight you can get it to join in, meaning you take less damage and get the fight over quicker. Keep it fed and happy and your mount will become your best friend. Enter a city, shout that you want one and you'll be inundated with offers in minutes.



WAYPOINTS

6 The shortest distance to any place is a straight line – use waypoints and you'll find you don't have to run around in circles looking for locations. Get a mission and you have a waypoint to follow, but you can manually set them by either dropping one when you're in a useful place (like a mission terminal), or by using the planetary map when you're outside the city. This means that wherever you are, you can get to a city. You can also get useful waypoints emailed from other players so you don't have to rely on co-ordinates to find places.

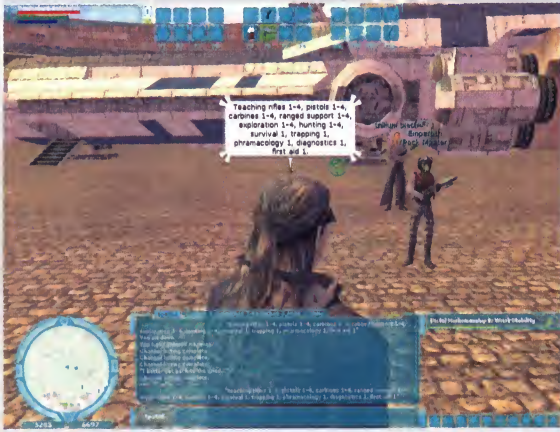


MACRO-ONI CHEESE

7 Now that you're comfortable with the game, it's time to speed things up. You can make your own macros to set up the keys you press most automatically. You could set a macro to lay down, send your pet into combat, fire off several special attacks and more just by pressing one function key. Press CTRL+A to access 'edit macro'. Make sure you place a ';' between the different commands. This is especially useful for when you're grinding out foraging or crafting skills, or for a medic healing when you're in a camp or a medic centre.

APPRENTICESHIP

8 There's nothing more frustrating than getting enough XP to earn a Master skill, only to discover that you haven't got enough apprenticeship points to learn it. As soon as you start to progress through any skill tree, make sure you shout about it. When you enter a city, a star port or any crowded area, shout and tell everyone what skills you've learned and that you want to teach them. If anyone wants them, group with them and teach them, pushing up your apprenticeship points and laying the groundwork for that Master skill level when you reach it.



PREPARE FOR BATTLE

9 Before you leave the safety of a city to go to war, it's worth visiting a cantina and watching the dancers or listening to the musicians. Not only are the female dancers cute to watch, it lowers your battle fatigue and restores your 'mind' points, making it easier to last longer in fights: Visit the local medic centre so that player medics can heal your wounds and restore your health points, leaving your stimpacks free to use in the field when there isn't a medic on hand. Use your overhead map (CTRL+M) to find the cantina and medic centre.

SPLASH THE CASH

10 Making stacks of cash is the key to getting the best weapons and armour. Plus, you never want to be short of cash when you need to travel to another planet quickly to go on a mission or meet up for a hunt. Mission terminals pay you for completing small missions, either destroying nests or finding people. Become an Artisan or a Weaponsmith and you can set up a vendor to sell your goods. You can also put any items you find up for sale on a Vendor Terminal in a city, so any other players can bid on them.



Publisher: Activision
Developer: Sony Online Entertainment
Website: starwarsgalaxies.station.sony.com

COMMUNITY CHEST

MORROWIND



Making the most of *Morrowind* has never been easier. And who better to explain how than *Chris Anderson*?

Morrowind is revolutionary in the RPG genre for many reasons. As a game, it speaks for itself, but the release of the toolset with the boxed game has spawned a huge and active modding community. From mods that change aesthetics to those that introduce new stories, characters and concepts to the *Morrowind* experience, the rich variety of material available ensures there's something to suit all tastes. What you see here, while representative of some of the best *Morrowind* mods, is little more than the tip of the iceberg...



NPC REPLACER 3.50

(GRAPHICS MOD)
members.xoom.virgilio.it/zerothehero

This mod replaces the heads that come with the original game with far more realistic and attractive models. All of the NPCs are replaced, and key characters have been singled out and given special attention. Try it – you'll never look back.



CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT 2

(QUEST MOD)
thelys.free.fr/barbosa.htm

This is arguably the best quest mod available. The first in the series was a short but reasonable introduction to Ariela, the key character in the game, but this sequel introduces many new NPCs, landmasses and towns. It's sure to keep you busy for weeks if you play to the end.



MORROWIND VISUAL PACK 2.11

(GRAPHICS MOD)
phreakers.net/khalazzaprod/
The original textures and scenery that came with the game were impressive when *Morrowind* first appeared, but they're showing their age now. This mod replaces many textures, making *Morrowind* look as good as it plays for the first time since it was released.



SWORD OF PERITHIA

(TOTAL CONVERSION)
thelys.free.fr/sergoyan.htm

At the time of writing, this is the only true total conversion in existence for *Morrowind*. It's an excellent fantasy adventure mod too, but you'll have to start a new game with a new character to play it. Such is the nature of total conversions, but it's worth it.



ILLUMINATED ORDER

(QUEST MOD)
www.hiredgoons.net/MWFiles
Excellent storytelling and dialogue are the hallmarks of this dark and sinister mod, which enables you to become a lich – but you can play it through without converting to the dark side. This is a must-have quest mod and one of the most professional *Morrowind* mods ever made.



MOONSPAWN

(QUEST MOD)
groups.msn.com/CaladanBrood/
A floating tower holds its own secrets if you have the persistence to get to the bottom of the story at the centre of this excellent mod. Fantastic level design sets Moonspawn apart from its many quest and action-oriented counterparts. Keep an eye out for version 2, due out some time soon.



FANTASY COLOUR MORROWIND

(GRAPHICS MOD)
tfo.rh.rit.edu/esforum/brash/HighColorFull.rar
Hate the lifeless colours in *Morrowind*? This is for you. Fantasy colours is what it claims and that's exactly what you get. The new textures in this bring new life to *Morrowind*, and although they're not hi-res, they still look excellent.



JEREMY'S ARMOUR

(CONTENT MOD)
www.geocities.com/jw_mcguinn/rmory.html
There are tons of armour mods, but Jeremy's efforts stand out a mile due to their attention to detail and original design. If you're tired of clunking around in ebony armour and want something a bit more stylish, you're sure to find something here to float your boat.

A close-up shot of Chewbacca's face, showing his characteristic brown fur and blue eyes. He has a serious expression.

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THE FIRST CHOICE FOR PC GAMERS

HARDWARE

ALL THE LATEST NEWS AND REVIEWS FROM THE WORLD OF PC HARDWARE

HAPPY
NEW
YEAR



■ 2004 Phil Wand

▲ Hope you had a good Christmas and that you still have some cash left over to spend on presents for your PC in the New Year. From a gaming point of view, 2004 promises to be the most amazing ever. Not only do we have the double whammy of *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2* to look forward to, we also have several new processors, new video cards and new hardware standards to make everything smoother, faster and even more realistic. Both Intel and AMD have some stirring technology heading our way, along with NVIDIA and ATI.

But it's not just about next generation kit – prices are coming down on all the stuff you couldn't afford last year. With CRT now accounting for the minority of sales, you can expect the price of LCD screens to drop even further – and for big-inch products to trickle into the sub-£400 price bracket towards the end of the year.

I can't repeat often enough just how good a decent flat screen is for games. Brighter, cleaner and ergonomically superior to phosphor, it can really make a difference if you play games a lot. With a more clinical, flicker-free image, you'll have to play for 24 hours non-stop before your eyes get tired.

And in the same way that the flat panel has made the monitor redundant, wireless networking will become the accepted way of connecting this year. Cables are a yesteryear nonsense: our phones no longer have cables, our remote controls no longer have cables, and when you can make your whole house sing in broadband, trailing wires across your floor and knotting them behind desks seems such an old-fashioned thing to do. So 1990s.

So here's to a mammoth year ahead with some great hardware.

HARDWARE CALENDAR

Grunt and graphics are the two areas of hardware that interest every gamer. Here's a brief rundown of what you can expect to see on the shelves later this year

IT'S BEEN A busy year and 2004 shows no sign of letting up, with new cards and processors already announced. Here's what you can expect to see coming out this year...

NEW PROCESSORS

As big name developers were announcing the delay of big name games, the hardware world was told it had to wait for the supercharged Pentium 4, code-named Prescott. The 90-nanometer silicon engine – the size refers to the actual dimensions of the chip's features – will be Intel's biggest release of 2004 and the CPU you should expect to see in around half of all PCs sold during the year.

The Prescott P4 will be made using new techniques and includes new instructions, plus a tighter design with shorter interconnects to go faster and do more than the current Northwood. It will also chuck out a fifth more heat. The chip giant spent \$4 billion on research and development in 2003, and you can expect the Prescott to boast a 775-pin connector, PCI Express (with a thundering 4GB/sec bandwidth, it replaces AGP), a 1GHz front-side bus and 4GHz clock towards the end of the year.

Arch rival AMD plans to switch to a 90nm process some time in the middle of the year, and for the time being products will continue with the 130nm process – identical to that of the Northwood. Code-named San Diego, the 90nm Athlon 64 FX should appear along with the Winchester and Paris, code-names for the 90nm Athlon 64 and Athlon XP products respectively. You can also expect to see many more 64-bit motherboards appearing over the course of the coming few months – ALI, ATI, NVIDIA, SIS and Via will be producing chipsets for the 64-bit überchip – and for the AMD vs Intel battle to be really cooking in time for summer. It should also become clear whether or not AMD's plan for 64-bit domination has succeeded or not.

NEW VIDEO CARDS

Quite soon now, NVIDIA hopes to release the successor to its current crop of NV3x-based graphics cards, code-named NV4x. It will feature full support for the key technologies from DirectX 9.1 – Pixel Shader 3.0 and Vertex Shader 3.0 – but will initially appear with an AGP interface, as PCI Express will not make its appearance until Spring at the earliest. There's much speculation about the upgraded GeForce hardware's exact specifications, but it's likely to include eight rendering pipelines (up from four), and at least GDDR-II RAM. The date for NV40 isn't set, but it's likely to be before CeBIT 2004 and timed to coincide with the launch of *Doom 3*. My bet's on for the second week of March.

As for the Canadians, ATI's much vaunted R4xx chip, code-named Loki, should make an entrance around the same time. As with NV4x, there's a lot of speculation surrounding its abilities. What is known is that, as with its NVIDIA equivalent, Pixel Shader 3.0 and Vertex Shader 3.0 will be supported, as will the 32-bit processing precision required by the next generation of DirectX. Rumours abound that it will be twice as fast as the current Radeons and will feature PCI Express from the off, but there's no solid evidence to support either claim. However, you can be sure that, along with the new GeForce, it'll help make 2004 a memorable year for gamers.



The premier processor for 2004 – or just the deputy?

WANDY'S WINNERS

A QUICK LOOK BACK AT WHAT MADE LAST YEAR THE GREAT YEAR IT WAS...

BEST PROCESSOR

Intel's Pentium 4 with Hyper-Threading is the obvious choice, but AMD systems began to appear in November suggesting that the Athlon 64 was the performance king. And it wasn't lying. However, given that the 64-bit Athy requires that you buy a new motherboard, the Intel CPU wins our vote.

BEST VIDEO CARD

As winter drew in, NVIDIA released new drivers which demonstrated that its hardware was right up with ATI. But the way the 9800 and 9600 have ruled the top and mid-range sectors means they get the pat on the back. Now that ATI has Creative Labs onboard, NVIDIA has its work cut out.

BEST MOTHERBOARD

The MSI Neo-FIS2R wins because it's the motherboard for everyone. On the one hand, it's just another Pentium motherboard which will provide a solid base for any Intel-based system. On the other, it's the most nuts overclocking toy yet invented, and an inexpensive one at that.

BEST SCREEN

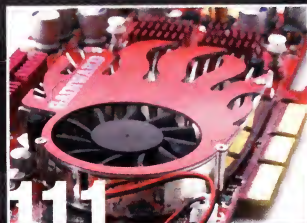
There are plenty of £300 flat screens on the market these days, but the Hitachi CML174SXW remains the best looking, the best quality and delivers the best performance. There is no other 17-inch LCD to consider.

BEST SOUND CARD

The M-Audio Revolution may not support the same mad array of standards as the Creative Audigy 2, but it sounds magically better. And that's what counts.

BEST PERIPHERAL

Call me an old fuddy-duddy, but Microsoft's Optical Mouse Blue is a winner. It has three buttons, is well constructed and moves the cursor around without lag. What more do you want from a mouse?



REVIEWS

Our new top-rated graphics card



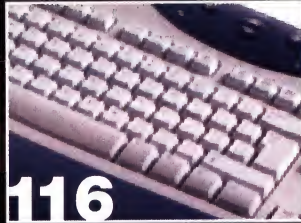
REVIEWS

Dance yourself dizzy



DEAR WANDY

Our very own doctor in da house



BUYER'S GUIDE

The best buys listed here

Water, Water, Everywhere

Big increases in speed mean big increases in heat. Water cooling could really take off over the next 18 months...

IN 1997, noise regulations caught up with the Porsche 993 and forced the German manufacturer to fit a water pump to its infamous flat-six slot-car. In the same way, several hardware manufacturers are turning to liquid cooling to deal with the enormous heat produced by today's fast silicon and to cut back on the incessant whirring caused by the fans normally used to chill it. With the Prescott (see main news story) predicted to chuck out 20% more heat than a standard Pentium 4, and with its 2005 successor likely to produce half as much heat again, quiet and efficient cooling will be essential. A number of key companies are already looking at different ways to deal with the heat of next year's chips.

Even a basic understanding of physics will tell you that water and electricity don't mix, but if designed and assembled properly, the risks are low. Last year, you could buy a special Hercules 3D Prophet with an officially adapted waterblock – all you needed to add was a pump, some clamps and some pipes, then hold it under a tap. This year, the number of 'complete' products available to end users has increased dramatically.

Gainward sells a range of GeForce cards that feature water cooling, and Sapphire recently unveiled a prototype



Water-cooled hardware: a glimpse of the future?

Radeon with a liquid-chilled jacket. They're expensive options, but are ideal if you're looking to clock the crap out of your video hardware, and also if you're sick to death of the infernal din of cooling fans. If you live around a number of high-spec PCs, you'll understand why shutting them up is worth any price.

Within the next couple of months, I'll be taking a long look at Waterchill's product

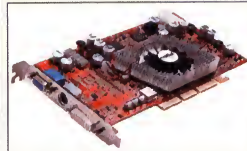
line-up, which includes CPU coolers, chip set coolers and video coolers.

I must admit, I remain to be convinced about the benefits of swirling water around expensive components, but each Waterchill product comes with unique safety controls. Assuming I don't electrocute myself, I'll be reporting back very shortly on what looks to be the future for efficient, noiseless cooling.

"They're expensive options, but are ideal if you're looking to clock the crap out of your video hardware"

SNIPPETS

CRUCIAL RADS



Crucial has announced a new line-up of inexpensive Radeon variants: the £326 Radeon 9800 Pro 256MB, the £246 Radeon 9800 Pro 128MB, the £120 Radeon 9600 Pro 128MB, the £65 Radeon 9200 128MB, and the £38 Radeon 9200 SE 64MB. I'm not going to mention anything else about them, because despite repeated requests, Crucial has never sent me any products for review. Instead, I've had to beg, steal or borrow its products from friends and colleagues. crucial.com/uk

NO WIRES MEG



Renowned for its graphics cards and motherboards, Gigabyte has just introduced a 108MB/sec version of its 802.11g wireless router. That's more bandwidth than is available to your average household LAN. The new GN-B49G features Extended Distribution Wireless System (EDWS), previously seen in products such as the GN-A17GU and GN-BR404W. The router includes 64/128/152 WEP encryption, a firewall and various security/blocking options. Price TBA. www.gigabyte.com.tw

SHUTTLES IN ORBIT



As well as having the lion's share of the mini PC market, Shuttle has recently announced record high revenues for the third month in succession and expects shipments to top half a million units this year – a monster 140% growth over 2002 sales. As I've said before, the XPC and others like it point to the future of PC design, and we'll all be using something similar within a couple of years. You can even put AMD's Athlon 64 in a Shuttle, which should silence you if you think that small must be slow. www.shuttle.com

TRULY SPLENDID

Acronis True Image makes hard drive backups a cinch

If you use Norton Ghost for backing up or replicating your hard drives, you should take a look at Acronis True Image instead. Not only is the product faster and slicker than its Symantec rival, it can create an image of your hard drive while you're still using it – straight from the Windows desktop, without the need to reboot. It's one of the most impressive software utilities I've seen this year and has helped to speed up PC ZONE's lengthy benchmark routine. If you're looking to upgrade your hard drive, or just keep snapshots of it, True Image will prove invaluable. www.acronis.com

DRIVER WATCH



Time for an update? One look at our chart will tell you

MOTHERBOARD

MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB
Intel	Software Installation Utility	5.0.2.1003	27-Aug-03	1.4MB	support.intel.com
NVIDIA	Forceware	3.13	03-Nov-03	12.9MB	www.nvidia.com
SIS	AGP	1.1.7	07-Oct-03	5.4MB	download.sis.com
VIA	Hyperion	4.51	02-Dec-03	1.4MB	www.viaarena.com

GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB
ATI	Display, Control Panel, WDM	CATALYST 3.9	05-Nov-03	25MB	www.ati.com
NVIDIA	Detonator FX	52.16	23-Oct-03	8MB	www.nvidia.com

SOUND

MANUFACTURER	NAME	DESC	RELEASED	SIZE	WEB
Creative	EAX 4.0 ADVANCED HD Update	EAX4DRV	19-Nov-03	13.8MB	uk.europe.creative.com
M-Audio	Revolution	5.10.00.0051	04-Sep-03	10MB	m-audio.com

DANCE DANCE DANCE

■ £29.99 | Manufacturer: Logic3 | Phone: 020 8902 2211 | logic3.com

Will Porter finds something that makes him look even more of a plum

IT'S NO coincidence that the least coordinated member of the team was given a dance mat to review. Y'see, I'm the sort of guy that has to clench his tongue between his teeth while performing functions such as walking, talking and breathing simultaneously. If you can think of a perilous surface, then the chances are I've fallen off it. Now this sort of thing generally doesn't go unnoticed, so now I'm the proud owner of a *Dance Dance Dance* CD and accompanying dance mat, despite the fact I have no style, rhythm or grace to speak of. Or dignity, did I mention that? I've got no dignity anymore. None.

Looking all the world like a lumpy Twister mat, there's certainly no faulting my new-fangled polythene dance floor; the main problem I found was that I was bouncing around so much, I'd occasionally find myself standing on the left arrow and furiously stamping on the feet of my mocking audience. Then again, this could easily be construed as a fault of my own neural system rather than that of the mat itself.

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

There are nine pressure pads on the mat, which smells slightly of the crash mats PE teachers used to make you do somersaults on during the harsh PE lessons of the early 1990s.

You won't be expected to master all nine pressure pads when you start out, unless you make it explicitly clear to your computer that you're either a) stupid or b) an octopus. The *Dance Dance Dance* game itself

is functional: it has fairly decent covers of pop fluff like *Genie In A Bottle*, *Mambo No.5* and *Livin' La Vida Loca* that won't melt your ears any more than the originals did. Hell, it even improves on Toploader's

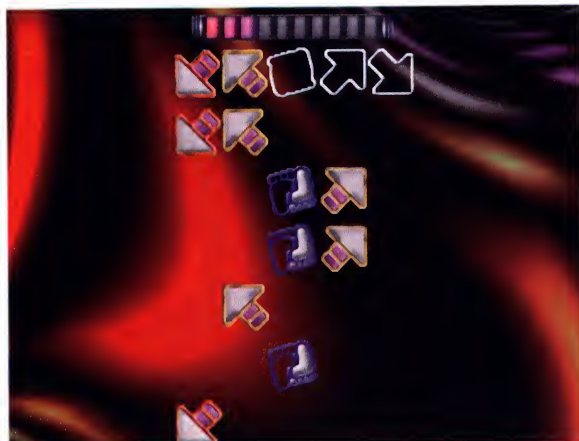
whining ginger opus, *Dancing In The Moonlight*.

To get bopping, select a single tune to jig to, or you can go for arcade mode which gives you a series of shuffles at increasing difficulties. The main problem, though, is that everything gets very difficult very quickly. One minute you're stamping your right foot like a



DANCE MAT

"One minute you're stamping your foot like a horse, the next you're moving like Michael Flatley"



Have you stopped dancing yet?

horse counting to ten on a low-budget '70s talent show, and the next you're Michael Flatley.

It's difficult to know how to score something like this. Would I ever consider buying one? Nope, as I don't like wasting my money on tat. Would I enjoy

playing it in a post-pub haze? Obviously. So ultimately, you've only got to ask yourself one question: "Do I want to attach a dance mat to my PC?" If the answer is positive, then here's your golden chance. And close the door on your way out. **PCZ**

BEST FOOT FORWARD

USING THE MAT IN STUPID WAYS

Seeing as the mat effectively hijacks control of the Q, E, S, Z, C and cursor keys, you can play normal games with it too. So, if you're bored, a quick game of *Unreal Tournament* can easily become an energetic workout for body and mind. Alternatively, instead of simply watching *Max Payne* go through the motions, you too can leap and dive around and imagine that you're a heartless murderer as well. Perhaps.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ It's fun!
- ✓ It's the best dance mat we've seen for the PC
- ✗ Pretty basic game
- ✗ Would you ever play it more than once?
- ✗ Can cause public humiliation

65

More David Brent than Fred Astaire, but it's still a lot of fun

ULTRA/960 GOLDEN SAMPLE

128MB

■ Price: £137 | Manufacturer: Gainward | Phone: 01635 524949 | www.gainward.co.uk

Can the 5700 Ultra wrestle our Best Value crown from ATI?

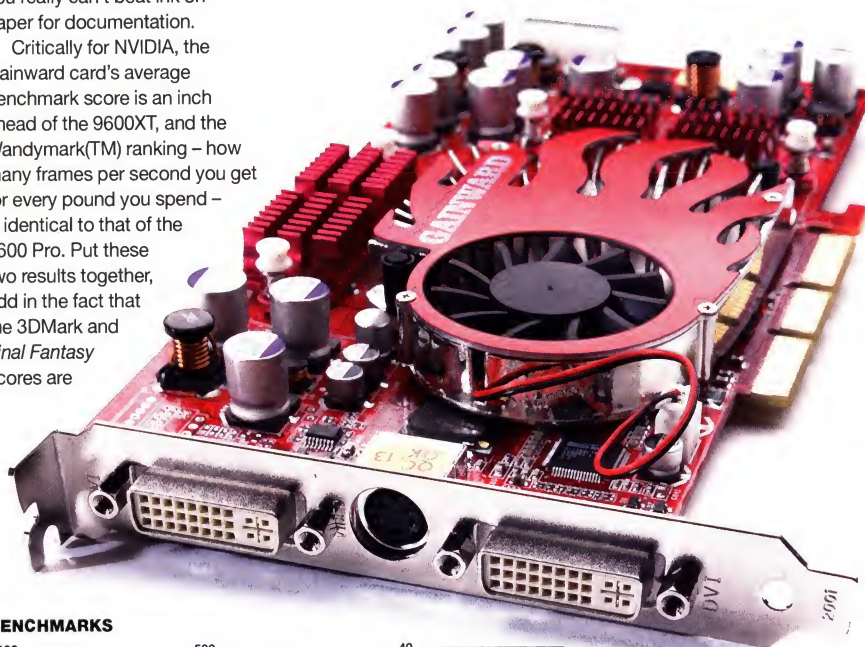
LAUNCHED to compete with the Radeon 9600XT, the GeForce FX 5700 Ultra matches or exceeds the ATI hardware for agility and is priced accordingly. In the majority of benchmarks, the middleweight NVIDIA card nips ahead of its rival and isn't too affected by antialiasing and anisotropic filtering – although as you should know by now, I view these as fashion accessories rather than gaming enhancements. You don't need them, they don't help gameplay, and the frame-rate drops off like a Nepalese peak. No thanks.

The box is presented in the traditional Gainward manner, which is a polite way of saying that it was designed by someone with no understanding of games, graphics or typography – a tin of peaches is more exciting. On the flipside, the manual is truly sumptuous. Over 50 pages in lucid English, plus full contact details, mode tables and even

the pin-outs for a DVI connector. You really can't beat ink on paper for documentation.

Critically for NVIDIA, the Gainward card's average benchmark score is an inch ahead of the 9600XT, and the Wandymark(TM) ranking – how many frames per second you get for every pound you spend – is identical to that of the 9600 Pro. Put these two results together, add in the fact that the 3DMark and *Final Fantasy* scores are

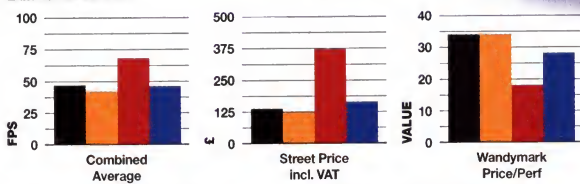
GRAPHICS CARD



unconditionally is the fact that both NVIDIA and ATI are due to launch a whole new raft technology before March.

So if you need a decent mid-ranger right now (like, today), the Ultra/960 will do you very nicely indeed – especially if you're an FX fanboi. But if you're just shooting the breeze with your piggy bank, wait for a couple of months before turning it completely upside down.

BENCHMARKS



■ GAINWARD ULTRA/960 GS 128MB ■ GIGABYTE RADEON 9600 PRO 128MB
 ■ SAPPHIRE RADEON 9800 PRO ATLANTIS 256MB ■ ASUS RADEON 9600XT 128MB
 The **COMBINED SCORE** is an average of a number of real-world gaming tests and bespoke benchmarking tools. The **WANDYMARK** is the combined average score divided by the price.

way out in front, and what you have is our new Editor's Choice.

It's strong on value, strong on performance – Gainward supplies its own tweak utility if you want to squeeze out more – and the only thing dissuading me from recommending the card

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Faster and cheaper than the 9600XT
- ✓ One of the best value cards available
- ✓ Decent manual
- ✗ Skinny bundle

91

Alongside the 9600 Pro for value – but even more rapid

C.A.R. 4000

■ Price: £621 | Manufacturer: TerraTec | Phone: +49 2157 8179 0 | www.terratec.co.uk

An all-in-one digital audio recorder, CD player and jukebox

THE C.A.R. 4000 is a swish-looking black box which enables you to record audio to a 40GB integrated hard drive and then play it back through your hi-fi. You can snapshot any sound from your PC via digital, analogue inputs and rip audio CDs complete with wires-free CDDb support. There's also a microphone input. In essence, it's a tricked up, modernised tape recorder. You can also play CDs, play MP3 data discs, and read MMC cards.

Initially, I installed the unit in my lounge – it's designed to work with your existing setup and looks just the part. The connection to the PC is via USB,

meaning I either had to drag Windows into the lounge or unplug the C.A.R. and wire it up in the office. Neither were very appealing, so I chose to use a laptop with a wireless card as a bridge. Alas, it soon transpired that the supplied software won't 'do' network drives, and the MP3s on my LAN might as well have been in Berlin. No matter, I decided to rip my favourite Tom

Petty album – at a heady 1x speed. Meaning if I wanted to rip all my other albums, it'd take me the best part of three years.

I really want to like TerraTec wares. The Aureon cards challenge the Audigy, but the sound is lacking and they 'thump' your speakers when you shut down. The Mystify range, which includes peripherals such as the Boomslang, gives people

the opportunity to try something antithetic of the mainstream, but there's a question mark over build quality and real world practicality. And the C.A.R. 4000 appears to be a Teutonic-grade rack for the discerning MP3 nut, but it's flawed in every key area. The client software is awful, there's no support for UNC or mapped drives, the USB

connection is questionable, and if you want to rip your existing CDs, you're limited to 1x recording. To cap it all, you could build a library PC and pair it with a PRISMIQ MediaPlayer (a PAL version is scheduled later this year) for the same money.

The TerraTec website remains a bonanza of interesting toys and gadgets, and one day I'm sure I'll come across something that floats my boat. But not yet.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Beautifully screwed together
- ✓ Documentation, conceptually a nice idea
- ✗ Far too much money
- ✗ Too many niggles

56

There's a decent product lurking here. Shame I couldn't find it





DEAR WANDY

Spot of bother with your computer? Trouble with your hardware, can't control your software? Write to our resident brain-man for expert PC advice. No job too small...

■ SNIFFING DRY MARKERS Phil Wand

LET IT ALL OUT

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us and in turn, we may well share them with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in-type thing. **Write to Dear Wandy, PC ZONE**, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ. **Email** Address your letters to us at wandy@dearwandy.com with the subject heading 'Dear Wandy'. Please note: while we can assure you that we read absolutely every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Sorry.

DIFFICULT DATA RATE

Q I got the urge to build my own PC two years ago and seeing as it's now time for Santa to deliver some new goodies for me to drop in, I'd like some advice on upgrading.

My current spec is a Gigabyte 7VAX Socket A motherboard with DDR400, Athlon 1400MHz K7 266FSB, 256MB 266MHz DDR, 128MB Sapphire Atlantis Radeon 9700, 30GB Maxtor HD and Windows 98 SE. I don't seem to have any problems playing games with this spec, but would like to upgrade the processor for something like a 2600MHz or similar for around £100. The other obvious upgrade would be the memory – what spec and type would you recommend as the motherboard goes up to DDR400? What other mods would you recommend?

For example, would I get any benefit changing to Windows XP Home or Pro? Also, could you tell me if it's the driver version for my graphics card which is telling me incorrectly that I have a Radeon 9700 Pro when I use things like PCMark2002?

Stuart Webster

A I was certain the 7VAX supported Thoroughbred AMD chips with a 266MHz front-side bus, and glancing at the Gigabyte FAQ, I saw I wasn't wrong. However, a longer look at the product page revealed that your motherboard has recently tested fine with 333FSB Athlons, and that BIOS updates enable you to use 2500+/2800+/3000+ Bartons with it. So an XP 2800+ chip will sit sweetly in your machine, deliver a good deal more punch, and will also

leave you with £10 change from your budget.

As for the memory, that's a little trickier. To start with, you suggest your board has DDR400 capabilities – it's a common misconception that the KT400 features a 400MHz FSB and support for DDR400 RAM. The KT400 is identical to the KT333 in terms of clock speeds, with up to 333MHz FSB and DDR333 chips. Consider that the front-side bus is the physical path that links your processor to your memory, and it should be easy to understand why both ends need to jog along at the same speed. Indeed, while you can put DDR400 on your board, there's no advantage to be had from doing so – it's even likely the system will perform worse than if you were to use DDR333.

As for using XP Home or Pro, this largely depends on your environment, for example, whether you're on a LAN, whether you have to connect to your intranet at work and so on. In most cases, XP Home suits home users and hence the name. Regarding your last question, the primary device name does indeed come from your driver set. Right now, I'm using a soft-modded Hercules Radeon 9800 SE All-In-Wonder, and the URL of the tweaked driver set is displayed after the card's name in benchmarks.

WSAEINTR: THE SEQUEL

Q I read your response regarding the WSAEINTR error with interest (PC ZONE 135), as I've had the same problem and had given up trying to play *Counter-Strike*. I was relieved to see there was a response to the problem, but when following your instructions I found that I could not disable the QoS Packet Scheduler as it was greyed out. The only option I have is to uninstall it, but I'm

wary of doing this as I don't know what its function is, and whether it might affect my system. Is it safe to uninstall? Please help me as I'm unable to play *Counter-Strike* and being a gaming magazine, you should know what a tragedy this is!

John

A You can safely uninstall the QoS Scheduler simply by highlighting it and clicking the button beneath. Be warned, though, that its removal is not the panacea for all connection ills – you may find that the WinSock error won't go away, and that you'll still have to go through some of the other things I suggested a few months back.

FAILED TO PLAY (PART 1)

Q I own an Advent PC with P4 HT, 512MB DDR and GeForce4 MX 440SE. What's the problem? Well, my PC runs

single-player games fine, but when I try and play over the Internet, it gets a little of the way and says 'failed to connect to server'. So, I quit the game, try another one, and eventually am left staring at a list of servers wondering what to do.

Why is this? Can you help me out? I want to play *Battlefield 1942* on the Internet – you must know how bad the campaign is – and annihilate my mates with big guns and basically have a good time. I also want it ready for the *Half-Life 2* release!

Matthew Gilroy

A *Battlefield 1942* is spectacularly good over a network, and the Desert Combat mod is my favourite online shooter. I've had no problems running the game from behind a router and firewall. While some titles require you to forward certain ports in order for them to work properly – *Need For Speed Underground* being the most obvious example – *Battlefield 1942* has never required any tweaking. It just works.

So, I'm almost certain it's a version conflict – either you're using an outdated version of the game, or the server to which you're trying to connect is an older type. My experience is that *BF 1942* very rarely provides a helpful error message ('version mismatch' isn't a hard one to trap, now is it?), and 'failed to connect to server' can mean any one of a number of things, but most likely that you've been banned or haven't updated your game.

For full details and download locations, visit www.battlefield1942.com – and once it's sorted, come play on our very own Desert Combat server.

FAILED TO PLAY (PART 2)

Q Having obtained a DSL connection, I eagerly looked forward to some online



Come play Desert Combat on the PC ZONE Battlefield server.

"Please help me – all I want to do is play *Battlefield 1942*, annihilate my mates with big guns and have a good time"

"You've done what most PC users are guilty of from time to time – installed new drivers for no reason other than they've just been released"

gaming. But I can't get *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault* to connect to a single server, and the only response I get is 'server connection timed out'. I've patched the game up to v1.11. I also use a personal firewall and anti-virus, but even with them disabled, I still have the same problem. I can play every other game online – can you shed some light on this?

Steve Daly

A As with *Battlefield 1942*, *MOH:AA* lacks decent error reporting, and leaves many users wondering what the problem is. I believe you have the same problem as described previously: you're running the wrong version of the game – the fact you can play every other title without any grief points to the fact that it's something peculiar to *MOH* and not to your system. Either the patch process failed, or you installed it to the wrong folder (easily done if the installer isn't smart enough to use the registry to locate the target executable). Download the patch and try again. If it still gives you grief after that, reinstall the game from scratch and apply the upgrade.

BANG

Q I keep getting an error message pop up while I'm playing *Counter-Strike*. It says: Microsoft Visual C++ Runtime Library, Runtime Error, Abnormal Program Termination – with a path to hl.exe. This has always happened, not just since I started using Steam. It seems to happen in every titled powered

by a *Quake* engine – so you can imagine how annoying it is.

My PC is as follows: AMD Athlon XP 2000+, 768MB PC2100 RAM, Gigabyte GA-7VRXP motherboard, Creative GeForce4 Ti4600, Sound Blaster Live! 5.1. I've tried as many combinations of new and old drivers as you can think of, and have even performed a complete format and reinstall, but still the problem persists. Please, please,

Software rendering. If this cures the error, I'd concentrate on trying different Detonator drivers (remembering to uninstall the previous version) and, as a final resort, try another video card in your machine. It goes without saying that your PC should always be fully patched up too – you can do this by visiting windowsupdate.microsoft.com



The Sony DDU1621 DVD drive will set you back around £20.

please help me, before I pull out the rest of my hair and bite through a good CD in frustration!

Mark Webster

A Runtime errors in games normally occur through a mismatch of drivers. I appreciate that you've been through untold combinations in an effort to solve the problem, but it's quite unlikely to be anything else – especially as you say you've reformatted and started from fresh. How do you configure your graphics for *Half-Life*? If you use OpenGL rather than Direct3D, this could be the source of your problems. Try flipping between the two modes to see if this helps stability, and as a last resort try

DISAPPEARING DVD

Q I've got a problem with my DVD-ROM drive – it used to play DVDs, but now it only plays CDs. It stopped working a few years ago, but I never bothered sorting it. Now that a lot of new games are being released on DVD, and your wonderful cover discs are full of stuff, I want it fully functional again. It's a Samsung SD-608 and yes, I know it's a bit old, but as I say it's been the least of my worries for the past few years.

Andrew Hughes

A As you may know, a DVD drive contains two heads – one to read CDs, one to read DVDs. There's a chance that one half of your drive has simply stopped working as a result of a defect, but it's more likely that the DVD lens is dirty and a head cleaner will sort out most errors in such cases.

Failing that, right-click on My Computer, select the Hardware tab and click Device Manager. Open the node of the device tree that contains your DVD drive, and open the Properties for it. Check that

WANDY'S TOP TIPS



Unknown to most users, the Windows 2000 Desktop Themes manager enables you to tweak your desktop theme.

THEME FROM 2000

A short and simple tip this month for Windows 2000 users. Open the Start menu, select Run, and type 'themes'. The little-known Desktop Themes Manager will appear, a utility which provides desktop configuration options including little-known features such as monthly theme rotation. While Windows 2000 themes are nowhere near as exciting as their XP equivalents, it remains a great way to fiddle with your desktop.

your region is selected – there have been reports of people fixing mysterious DVD problems simply by swapping between regions (note that you can only do this a fixed number of times, though).

There are also a similar number of reports from Windows 98 users with your exact same problem, and neither me nor anyone else seems to know the answer. Bear in mind that you can now buy a replacement, brand new DVD drive for £20 – not the most technical of advice, but it will instantly solve an awful lot of bother.

CATATONIC DRIVERS

Q I've been experiencing problems while playing games on my PC since installing the CATALYST 3.8 drivers included on the DVD of issue 136. My PC is a Time Saturn, AMD Athlon 2600+ 512MB with an ATI Radeon 9500 graphics card and MSI MS-6590 motherboard. The performance of my PC when playing games has worsened since installing the new driver. I noticed slowdown and lag on my games, particularly when there's a lot happening on-screen, a problem I didn't have with the preinstalled drivers on my machine.

I've been on the ATI website and installed CATALYST 3.9, but again am suffering the same problems. I'm a relatively inexperienced PC user, having only owned a PC since August this year. I don't know if I've

incorrectly installed the drivers. I removed the previous driver from the Add/Remove programs option in the Control Panel. My PC then automatically detected and installed the new drivers I'd downloaded. Is there something that I've failed to do?

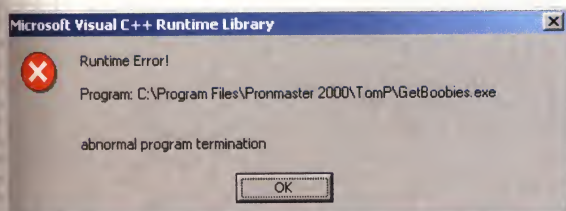
Matt Dunn

A You've done what most PC users are guilty of from time to time – installed new drivers for no reason other than they've just been released. In the same way that you don't go replacing your microwave oven every three months, you shouldn't go replacing drivers. If it works, and you've not seen a compelling reason to upgrade, leave well alone.

That aside, you've gone about things the right way, so I don't think there's anything 'funny' going on here – you just need to remove the 3.9 driver set and revert to a prior version. (There are more people reporting problems with 3.8 and 3.9 than I've seen in a long while, by the way.)

Visit the ATI website and follow the route through to download the latest drivers. There's an obscure link at the very bottom of the page that takes you to a long list of old drivers, and I'd guess that if you bought your machine around August, it would have CATALYST 3.6 on it. www.ati.com

Visit Wandy on the web at www.dearwandy.com



Error messages like this mean there's a bug in the program's code – or more likely that one of your drivers is misbehaving.



WATCHDOG

It may be Christmas, but there are still those companies who seem hell bent on ruining the festivities for everyone else. Shop 'em to us and we'll send the boys round...

■ CONSUMER CRUSADER Adam Phillips

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

If you're at the end of your tether, never fear, help is here! If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing, why not get it off your chest and drop us a line?

WRITE TO Watchdog, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog'

READ ME!

If you're writing in to complain about a product, please arm us with your full name, address and **contact number**. With PCs, make sure you also include all **purchasing details** such as reference and invoice numbers.

TIME FOR A CHANGE

What a nightmare. It's like those cars you read about. You know, the ones which turn out to be utter lemons despite those high tech production lines and strict quality control checks. They go back to the dealer time and time again, but ultimately prove the theory that you simply can't polish a turd.

Step forward the PC equivalent – as highlighted by Dr Simon Scarle, who bought a laptop from Time computers. "The machine worked fine for the first few months and then started having an intermittent fault whenever it was moved," explains Simon. "Namely, it couldn't find its hard disk when it was switched back on – but this could usually be fixed by picking the machine up, turning it upside down and lightly shaking it. However, this led to the hard disk failing outright."

The machine was then repaired by Time, but the intermittent fault remained – which lead to the hard disk eventually failing again. And again. And again.

"Furthermore, both the DVD and floppy drives have failed at different times," continues Simon. "Also, on one occasion when the screen failed, the machine was eventually returned to me with a repaired screen but a broken latch – and then the screen failed again within a fortnight."

The most recent entry into this catalogue of cock-ups was the machine being returned with a broken soundcard. "To add insult to injury, the Time helpdesk has grown increasingly hostile as time has gone on, and it's becoming more and more of a fight to arrange collection of the machine to be 'repaired'," fumes Simon. "This was illustrated by its blaming of the software, the pointless resetting of unchanged BIOS settings and increasingly long periods of being put on hold until you're forced to hang up. The whole thing ended up with Time refusing to collect the machine."

So, Simon's left with a non-functioning laptop, which on its best days has a reboot cycle akin to an Etch A Sketch, and which, according to the helpdesk, self-destructs *Mission Impossible*-style if Windows XP is installed. Which, to be fair, does seem to work relatively fine if you don't move the computer – which is just great for a laptop. Less said...

Well, Watchdog certainly admires Simon for not going down to Time's store and throwing the wretched laptop through its window. So what does the company have to say for itself?

"Problems could usually be fixed by turning the machine upside down and lightly shaking it"

"At Time Group, we do our best to diagnose, repair, test and return systems to our customers in full working order in the quickest possible time," says the company. "The Time Group is sorry to hear about the problems that Dr Scarle has been experiencing and we'd like to emphasise that cases like this are extremely rare."

It says it's changed a number of components and has run numerous diagnostic tests before returning Dr Scarle's laptop on each occasion: "However, the intermittent fault keeps on reappearing. Dr Scarle's laptop has recently been collected and exchanged for a brand new notebook and a memory upgrade has been agreed."



"No, no, Dr Scarle, you're quite wrong – your laptop is in full working order. Really."

We apologise for any inconvenience caused."

To be quite frank, it's the very least Time could have done. If you have any more problems Simon, please just let us know.

A RIGHT MESH?

You may recall Pete Sharpe from issue 136, who was hacked off that the graphics card supplied with his new Mesh PC was not the kick-ass one he'd ordered. Apparently, a number of Mesh PCs had shipped with incorrect graphic cards and had subsequently been sorted, but Pete had fallen through the net.

After we intervened, Mesh assured us that there had indeed been a cock-up in Pete's case, but any remaining customers who'd been affected would have their cards changed. Fair enough, we all thought.

But no, the saga continues. We then heard from Ian Hams, who sent in the following copy of a letter he'd fired off to Mesh regarding the issue.

"I note from the Watchdog article that you have tried to contact customers to address this graphics card issue. I'm very surprised that you've overlooked myself, as I had been in correspondence with you regarding this very issue in May of this year," he writes.

It also turns out that Ian was the original chap who wrote into Dear Wandy (page 122) to highlight the wrong graphics card issue in the first place. "However, unlike Pete Sharpe, I have not had the issue resolved despite numerous attempts with yourselves," Ian's letter continues. "As you'll appreciate, I am now very unhappy. I have lived with a sub-standard system for a while now and as far as I can tell, you have completely ignored my situation, despite assuring PC ZONE of your attempts to see the customer right."

This is a serious allegation and one we took to Mesh. The company got back to us with the following: "Ian Hams bought a system from Mesh earlier this year called Elite 2.8GHz, reviewed and awarded Best Buy in the April issue of *Computer Shopper* magazine," states the company.

Mesh goes on: "The VGA purchased with the system was consistent with what was reviewed at the time – the Radeon 9700 standard. I see no reason why the customer insists on an 'undeclared substitution of components'

and can assure him it's certainly not 'sub-standard'. The Elite 2.8GHz was supplied to the customer with the correct graphics adaptor, as reviewed."

It does appear Ian, that wires have been crossed here, because we've had a peek at the copy of *Computer Shopper* you've quoted and Mesh is absolutely right. Please let us know your thoughts.

ON THE OTHER HAND...

We receive hundreds of them in a single year – complaints, both big and small, about companies who've been dragging their heels in the customer service department. But it's very rare for Watchdog to receive a letter from the other side of the fence. So step forward John Molloy, who recently started working on a helpdesk for a large company.

"The first thing that has struck me is that around 95% of users do not even know what operating system they're using or even how to turn a PC off using the on/off button," says John. (NOT your typical PC ZONE reader then – Ed.)

"Because of this fact, it's often very difficult to get all the relevant information from a user, particularly if they see themselves as IT-savvy, as they

THE ACCUSED

OCUK



MESH
computers plc

TIME

GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT

SAINTS NOT SINNERS

iomega



▲ INCREDIBLY, THEY DO EXIST – THOSE COMPANIES THAT WILL BEND OVER BACKWARDS TO HELP OUT CUSTOMERS. EVEN AFTER CASH HAS CHANGED HANDS. WATCHDOG SALUTES YOU!

It's a miserable feeling when a piece of kit starts to play up. It's even more miserable when you flick an eye over the receipt and realise that it's out of warranty. So what to do? Reader Tim Bromige explains: "I bought an Iomega Predator external CDRW, and it began to develop some idiosyncrasies – particularly annoying was its reluctance to notice a blank disc being inserted."

After reinstalling the kit and searching the Iomega website for answers, Tim came up empty-handed. "So I gave the online help a go, but being a Saturday, I didn't expect anything to come of it," explains Tim. "A minute later and I was corresponding with Kurt who, after having exhausted

his standard list of questions, asked for my address and told me a new machine would be on its way within ten days.

**Goodwill to all men.
And Iomega Predator
owners...**



I was staggered!"

Yes, despite being out of warranty or the damage possibly being down to user-induced errors, Iomega agreed to the replacement and there was no charge for the postage and packing either.

"The new device duly arrived on the Wednesday, with a prepaid label for returning the old one," says Tim. "Now that's what I call customer service!" Us too, Tim. Well done Iomega.

don't want to admit they might have made a mistake."

John goes on to point out that the person on the helpdesk normally can't see your screen and needs all of the information you can give them to work through the problem: "I've come close to reminding some users that I don't have bionic X-ray vision and can't see down the phone," stresses John.

He also explains that in a great deal of larger companies, the helpdesk staff work from scripts and don't get to see how problems that are escalated to 'on the ground' support staff are resolved. "At least in my case, I get to do the hands-on fault finding, so this experience helps me when I'm manning the phone," says John. "If you're technically-minded and have any ideas about where the fault lies, then suggest them as this often helps."

John concludes: "So spare a thought for helpdesk staff when you speak to us. We're generally a happy bunch who try to stay

that way despite abusive and rude customers. Be pleasant, have a laugh, but above all be honest about what you've done so we can find the fault or problem you have."

SPLINTERED SOUND

Well, if Watchdog don't fix it first time round, we try, try, try again. Reader Ben Young contacted us a couple of months ago about the snap, crackle and popping coming from his speakers while playing *Splinter Cell*. We duly asked Ubisoft to help fix it and it came up trumps in double-time.

But we just received the following from Ben: "I'm afraid to say there's still a fairly major sound issue with the game," he explains. "As before, the problem lies with the firing of the SC-20K. Before, there was a screeching sound which made the game unplayable. This time, it's a hissing noise. This persists no matter what sound set-up changes are made, and only stops when the game is exited. It's so frustrating!"

We asked Ubisoft if it could shed any light on Ben's somewhat unique problem. Like before, it got back to us sharpish. "It turns out he tried contacting us via the forums and has never contacted our tech support direct," explains the technical support manager for Ubisoft. Oops, Ben. "I've advised him to turn down his sound configuration as it was running far too high, which should make a difference."

Ben, you should now be sorted. If not, the support manager has supplied you with his direct line. Good play, Ubisoft – we should put you in the Saints Not Sinners section.

P.S.

Ah, bless Overclockers UK. You may recall our little spat with the company a few months back, when it refused to comment on any reader complaint without faxed permission because of the data protection act, lawyers circling, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse and so on. So we went ahead and printed the reader complaint anyway.

Fast forward to the present day and we received a another complaint from reader Jason Shortland, who's been having problems with the company. The complaint is over shipment of parts for his new PC. We sent off the relatively simple complaint to Overclockers UK, but have yet to hear anything back from the firm. No surprises there then. So Jason, just so you know, we will keep chasing Overclockers UK. But don't hold your breath. [E]



Your typical tech support faces another day on the front line.

ON THE
CD/DVD

NEW!
Now supports
Video Drivers



GameShadow®
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**Bored of searching and
queueing for the latest
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See this month's coverdisc for
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visit the website:

www.gameshadow.com

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jolt
online gaming

BUYER'S GUIDE

It's a new year, so now could be the perfect time to stock up on some new hardware

Want to know more about our in-depth, authoritative Buyer's Guide? You've come to the right place. Editor's Choice is the class champ, the product that will satisfy everyone, no matter what

you play. Recommended products wear a silver medal: not quite as triumphant as the outright winner, but worthy and cost-effective nonetheless. Finally, the Also Consider product is

one we believe you should look at before settling for one of the other two – it may just tickle your dipple.

If you feel we've got something wrong, or just want to add your

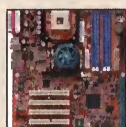
tuppence ha'penny, send an email to: letters@pczone.co.uk. If we act on any of your mind-blowing suggestions, we'll be certain to shower you with fabulous gifts. Promise.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

RECOMMENDED

ALSO CONSIDER

MOTHERBOARD



IS7-E (INTEL)

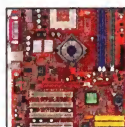
STREET PRICE £72

MANUFACTURER ABIT Computer

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.abit.com.tw

Huge performance coupled with a huge sigh of relief from your wallet. Although the IS7 uses Intel's Springdale chipset, essentially a restricted version of its Canterwood sibling, Abit's motherboard supports P4 800/533/400MHz CPUs with Hyper-Threading, and up to 4GB of Dual DDR. It also features onboard LAN, six-channel audio, and IEEE 1394 FireWire. Proof you don't need to spend over a ton for a top-rank motherboard.



K7N2 DELTA ILSR (ATHLON)

STREET PRICE £82

MANUFACTURER MSI

TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688

WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw

With the nForce2 chipset and the FSB wound up to 400MHz, the K7N2 Delta provides AMD die-hards with extra shove from a faster system bus and up to 3GB of Dual DDR memory. Although Barton-cored Athlons aren't a patch on their Hyper-Threading opposite numbers, boards like the K7N2 Delta close the gap. Other features include dual IEEE 1394 FireWire and automated BIOS updates.



875PNEO-FIS2R (INTEL)

STREET PRICE £132

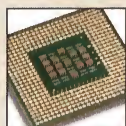
MANUFACTURER MSI

TELEPHONE 020 8813 6688

WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw

A high-end P4 Canterwood board, the Neo has some remarkable features, including dynamic overclocking – the hardware jumps on the throttle the moment you open apps – and automated BIOS updates using MSI's own Live Update software. Other features include IEEE 1394 FireWire, six-channel audio, onboard LAN and support for Dual DDR. Build quality and packaging are excellent.

PROCESSOR



P4 3.0GHZ

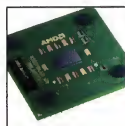
STREET PRICE £220

MANUFACTURER Intel

TELEPHONE 01793 403000

WEBSITE www.intel.com

For an additional £160, you could order the three-litre chip's big brother, the 3.2GHz, but we don't think the extra thrust justifies the price hike. With Hyper-Threading enabled, the 3.0GHz Pentium delivers a jaw-pounding power hit from twin processors and an 800MHz front-side bus. With a decent motherboard and some fast memory, products such as this make *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2* seem all the more plausible.



ATHLON XP 3000+ BARTON

STREET PRICE £174

MANUFACTURER AMD

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.amd.com

Let's not forget who drove Intel into rolling out key features such as Hyper-Threading. AMD's Athlon successfully shocked its rival into releasing technologies that were originally pencilled for the next Pentium. And although any 3.0GHz HT on paper makes the Barton look like a distant runner-up, it remains a great chip at a great price. Paired with a decent video card, it's a high-quality solution.



P4 2.4GHZ

STREET PRICE £125

MANUFACTURER Intel

TELEPHONE 01793 403 000

WEBSITE www.intel.com

For little more than £200 you can have our Editor's Choice motherboard and a Hyper-Threading Pentium 4 chip running at 2.4GHz with 800MHz FSB. Drop in our favourite Radeon 9800 Pro video card, and instantly you have a balls-on-machine that's ready and willing to tackle the next generation of gaming. If you're building a local games network and want big machines for small money, look no further.

HDD



WD1200JB 120GB

STREET PRICE £82

MANUFACTURER Western Digital

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

Many of you will view a 120GB HDD as an extravagance, but with games getting longer and broadband getting wider, a hangar-like hard drive gives you plenty of room for mucking about. You'll also bring that never-ending quest for more room to an abrupt end. The price is just right, and the performance second to none. Like the DiamondMax Plus9, the WD1200JB features an 8MB cache and a speed of 7200RPM.



DIAMONDMAX PLUS9 80GB

STREET PRICE £60

MANUFACTURER Maxtor

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.maxtor.com

The mid-sized Maxtor is for everyone: large, fast and not that expensive. Most users will find 80GB more than adequate for work, play and downloading requirements, and those greedy for more gig can jump a size up. The Fast ATA, 7200RPM drive includes Maxtor's Shock Protection System and Quiet Drive Technology, but for the Serial ATA version, expect a £20 premium.



RAPTOR 36GB

STREET PRICE £100

MANUFACTURER Western Digital

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

If you don't need a deep hole for your data, or if you intend keeping your dirt on a separate drive, the 10,000RPM Serial ATA Raptor makes the ideal foundation for your primary partition. It's wickedly fast, perhaps the fastest HDD available yet, and although designed for server environments, provides gaming desktops with the kind of warp-nine, low access times that make any application more nimble.

GRAPHICS CARD



ULTRA/960 GOLDEN SAMPLE 128MB

STREET PRICE £137

MANUFACTURER Gainward

TELEPHONE 01635 524949

WEBSITE www.gainward.co.uk

Who'd have thought that we'd see an NVIDIA card winning the value battle after ATI's domination of the past two years? The Golden Sample is faster than the Radeon and level pegs the 9600XT in all the benchmarks. Crucially, in terms of bangs for your buck, the 5700 Ultra wins – it's ATI's turn to play catch-up.



128MB RADEON 9600 PRO

STREET PRICE £122

MANUFACTURER Gigabyte

TELEPHONE 01908 362700

WEBSITE uk.giga-byte.com

The 9600 Pro ties for value with the 5700 Ultra. For less than half the cost of a big-ass Raddy, the 128MB middleweight delivers an amazing punch that knocks most rivals for six. Gigabyte's healthy bundle includes three top games, plus PowerDVD 5 and all the necessary cable whips. Only the recent arrival of Gainward's noticeably faster Ultra/960 Golden Sample prevents the Gigabyte card from holding onto top slot.



256MB V9950 ULTRA

STREET PRICE £380

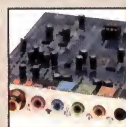
MANUFACTURER ASUSTeK Computer

TELEPHONE 00 886 2 2890 7121

WEBSITE www.asus.com

The FX 5900 Ultra finds its feet again with the release of the series 50 Detonator drivers – top class Radeons will find themselves level pegging with the big old GeForce. The one thing preventing this and other uber-cards from hogging the Editor's Choice slot is their alarming bad value – you don't get many frames per pound spent. That said, if you're after the hardware for top resolution, top quality gaming, look no further.

SOUNDCARD



REVOLUTION 7.1

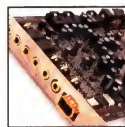
STREET PRICE £88

MANUFACTURER M-Audio

TELEPHONE 0871 717 7100

WEBSITE www.m-audio.co.uk

Although it lacks a few of its rivals' gamer-friendly features, including hardware DirectSound and a joystick/MIDI port, the Revolution more than makes up for any deficit with a truly astonishing quality of sound. Unique technologies enhance your enjoyment of games, music and movies. The software is straight-talking and boasts a familiar look and feel, making the card a delight to work with.



AUDIGY 2

STREET PRICE £75

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

A quantum leap from its predecessor, the Audigy 2 offers a boggling range of pro-gamer and DVD features, including 6.1 surround sound, EAX Advanced HD, Advanced Resolution DVD-Audio and 24-bit/96kHz recording – it was the first card to gain THX certification from LucasFilm. If you appreciate the immersive experience offered by high-fidelity surround sound, the Audigy will give you an experience like no other.



AUDIGY 2 PLATINUM EX

STREET PRICE £150

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

Offering the same core features as its little brother, the Platinum Ex is guaranteed to perform and sound like no other card. The external breakout box is a boon for serious listeners, and includes standard audio connections and volume controls. The big Platinum also offers dual SB1394 FireWire ports and optical links, a stereo RCA input, plus MIDI In and MIDI Out mini-DIN sockets.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

RECOMMENDED

ALSO CONSIDER



MX500

STREET PRICE £34
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com

Although it comes with a tail and doesn't have the same substantive feeling as the battery-reliant MX700, the MX500 remains a solid product and a solid performer in all games. It features Logitech's MX optical engine, mouse wheel (plus two additional buttons either side to aide document navigation), a task-switcher button, and two thumb buttons that speed up web navigation.



OPTICAL MOUSE BLUE

STREET PRICE £20
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk

If you've ever been boggled by the number of buttons on a mouse, and have fond memories of a time when three clickers and a wheel were all you needed, Microsoft's blue rodent is the perfect peripheral. It's nice to look at, nice to hold and, as any veteran FPS gamer will tell you, three buttons is all you need. Plus the latest optical technology means it works anywhere.



MX700

STREET PRICE £47
MANUFACTURER ACTURATOR Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com

Sporting the MX optical engine that made Logitech famous with gamers, the MX700 is essentially an MX500 with its tail lopped off. A cradle keeps your desk tidy and acts as a recharger for the unfettered rodent – making the mouse more attractive to people who don't do batteries. It's a touch pricey and we remain unconvinced that going cordless is worth the extra stash.

MICE



INTERNET NAVIGATOR

STREET PRICE £21
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com

The Internet Navigator lies absolutely flat on your desk, a trademark Logitech design that makes it look sleeker and 'feel' nicer. There's a scroll wheel along the left edge and a raft of customisable function keys to make trawling the web a cinch – you no longer have to swap back and forth to the mouse, and instead can leave your hands over on the keyboard. Once you browse this way, there's no going back.



OFFICE KEYBOARD

STREET PRICE £28
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/uk

Forget what you've learned about Microsoft software – their hardware is always of an exceedingly high build quality and, despite problems with early Intellimouse rodents, extremely durable. Shortcut buttons you think you'll never use soon become second nature, especially when reconfigured to suit your way of working, and once you learn the enhanced layout you'll never go back to tapping on anything else.



PRO KEYBOARD

STREET PRICE £50
MANUFACTURER Apple
TELEPHONE 0800 039 1010
WEBSITE www.apple.com/uk

If you think we're mad for including an Apple keyboard, think again. Anyone looking for a Rolls-Royce keyboard, and who can live without all the additional buttons, scroll wheels and assorted paraphernalia, need look no further. The Apple Pro plugs straight into your USB port and, with the help of third-party utilities, disguises the fact that it was designed for computer illiterates with fewer than two mouse buttons.

KEYBOARD



CYBORG EVO

STREET PRICE £26
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.com

A welcome new look for Saitek, and the welcome addition of a four-way adjustable head, larger buttons, plus a meaty damped throttle at the back of the base. As with all Cyborgs, the sculpted hand-rests can be repositioned ambidextrously and will suit all hand sizes. An eight-way hat switch, five thumb buttons with trigger, four base buttons and a shift key to double the possible combinations make this a winner.



CYBORG 3D GOLD

STREET PRICE £23
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451 900
WEBSITE www.saitek.com

A former Best Buy, the Saitek stick is renowned for the way it can be taken apart and put back together to fit your hand perfectly, and also for its ambidextrous nature – lefties as well as righties can get to grips with it. It features seven fire buttons and, like the Sidewinder, has eight hat buttons, a lever throttle and a twist grip for controlling the rudder. At this price you'd be daft not to.



HOTAS COUGAR

STREET PRICE £249
MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster
TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881
WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk

The John Holmes of joysticks. Based on the flight controls of an F-16, sturdy metal construction makes it feel like no other peripheral. With 28 customisable buttons, 18lbs of resistance built into its springs, programmable hat switches and an adaptive action for the separate throttle arm, it transforms any flight simulation and is the ultimate toy for wannabe pilots. It's ten times the cost of a regular joystick, but is in a class of its own.

JOYSTICK



INSPIRE 5.1 5300

STREET PRICE £50
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

The Inspire furnishes you with five satellite speakers, a sub and a wired remote control. All are sleek looking, solid feeling and great sounding. The bass is clean, the middle and treble crisp, and although power output doesn't climb into three digits, the amp provides more than enough oomph. Added to which, there's support for enhanced 5.1 surround sound on EAX titles. The only downside is that there's no headphone jack.



Z-640

STREET PRICE £70
MANUFACTURER Logitech
TELEPHONE 020 7309 0127
WEBSITE www.logitech.com

Logitech has patented the pressure-driver design of its subwoofer and we can hear the difference. For the money, the clout is simply amazing – bassheads among you will love it. Higher frequencies don't disappoint either, the 5.1 sounding almost as clean and inviting as the Inspire 5300s. Unlike the Creative set, the Z-640 has a headphone socket, but it's not conveniently sited. Shame.



MEGAWORKS THX 5.1 550

STREET PRICE £270
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

Successor to our Best Performance winner, the Megaworks 550 is a stunning 5.1 setup with five 70W capsule-shielded satellite speakers, a 150W wood subwoofer and a wired remote with a separate headphone socket. Built to THX standards, the sound quality is superb in DVDs and games – Creative's BASH system providing 500W of power that'll make you leap out of your seat.

SPEAKERS



CML174SXW

STREET PRICE £330
MANUFACTURER Hitachi
TELEPHONE 01628 585000
WEBSITE www.hitachidigitalmedia.com

When it comes to flat panel, fast-paced gaming, response times really count. And the CML174SXW has one of the lowest response times in its sector – a mere 16ms. It also delivers top-notch image quality, weighs in at just 5kg, and comes in colours that'll match your kit. If you're looking to make the move from CRT, and action games are a priority for you, the handsome little Hitachi is the obvious choice.



FLATRON L1710B

STREET PRICE £345
MANUFACTURER LG Electronics
TELEPHONE 01753 491500
WEBSITE www.lge.co.uk

This 17-inch panel came within a gnat's guff of knocking our Hitachi favourite from the top spot, but its slightly fatter price tag (from the addition of a USB hub), plus inconspicuous silver and grey trim saw the L1710B lose out. But don't think it's a distant second place – things are as close as a kiss, the LG offering marginally better picture quality and matching the Hitachi for speed. Yet another nail in the CRT coffin.



VISIONMASTER PRO 514

STREET PRICE £490
MANUFACTURER Iiyama
TELEPHONE 01438 745 482
WEBSITE www.iiyama.co.uk

Boasting a 22in Mitsubishi Electric DIAMONDTRON tube, 0.24 mm AG pitch and flicker-free refresh rates at immense resolutions, the Iiyama is a truly breathtaking sight on your desktop – not least because it gobbles so much of it. The big VM also features a typically comprehensive on-screen menu, USB hub and audio connectors. At 1600x1200, the display is rock steady at 110Hz and is ideal partner for gaming.

SCREENS



APPLE iPod 40GB

STREET PRICE £400
MANUFACTURER Apple
TELEPHONE 020 8210 1000
WEBSITE www.apple.com/uk

There are loads of MP3 players on the market but everybody wants an iPod – and the new version is even smaller (in size) yet bigger (in capacity). It weighs less than two CDs and can store up to 7,500 tracks, and as a bonus the supplied headphones are top notch too. The speedy Firewire interface (you'll need a suitable connection) and remote control rounds off a totally class act.



ARCHOS JUKEBOX MULTIMEDIA

STREET PRICE £316
MANUFACTURER Archos
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.archos.com

While it may never win any awards for aesthetics, the Jukebox Multimedia from Archos is the Swiss Army Knife of media players. Handling one of the widest selections of file types, the player can even play back a selection of video formats including DIVX. The sound is fantastic, but the bundled headphones are shite. And it's cheaper than the mighty iPod.



MUVO

STREET PRICE £50
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.europe.creative.com

The MuVo is one of the smartest gadgets we've seen. It comes in two parts, a USB key that plugs into any system running XP (without drivers), and a battery housing. Plug it into your PC and you can back up your documents. Drag a few MP3s onto the drive and when you snap the two halves together and plug in some headphones you've got one of the smallest MP3 players on the market.

MP3 PLAYER



MAILBOX



New Year, new resolutions to get off your chest. Make it your duty to write to us

■ HE'S ALL EARS Dave Woods



NVZONE

Hi there, great mag, praises, blah blah blah... To get to the point, I've come to the conclusion that your mag is definitely biased towards the NVIDIA camp. Take issue 136 and The Best Graphics Card Round-Up – what an utter load of tripe. Where's the Radeon 9700 Pro in the line-up? I can't see it, and you're not trying to tell me that my card isn't as good as a GeForce FX 5200 or 5600, because it is. It creams them both.

As a true gamer, I find this attitude disgusting. Your mag is called PC ZONE not NVIDIA-Only New Technology ZONE, so get back to where you should be and stop trying to be something

you're not. If you were being honest, the Radeon 9700 Pro would have appeared in your round-up near to the top – and you know it.

D Brady

The Radeon 9700 was released in the summer of 2002 and is now a two-year-old design. The FX products you mention were released within the last nine months and are current products. Three Radeon 9800 cards were tested, the XT tying for Best Performance with the GeForce FX 5900 Ultra. Further down, the 9600 Pro won Best Value and the Radeon 9200 won Best Budget. Now that's hardly what you'd call an NVIDIA love-in, is it?

THE ART OF WAR #1

I had to write to you about *Call Of Duty* – what an absolutely unbelievable game! I'm a World War II buff, and while I accept that these games come with a large pinch of Hollywood added, the developers of *Call Of Duty* have added plenty of authenticity.

There's real feeling and passion for the subject matter that comes through in the detail too, and the way the game is scripted – along with the



ATI took the awards, but some people still think we're biased.

Pegasus Bridge level – is awesome. I can only say that I've never had such an intense experience in a game in my whole life. When it was finally over, I found myself surveying the devastation in quiet awe...

I have an uncle who was in the 6th Airborne and went into France in Gliders on D-Day+1. He was eventually made a POW during the Battle of the Bulge.

While I'm fully aware that this is just a game and the sentiments expressed may strike some as odd or over the top, I feel that if this medium can get across some idea, no matter how small, of what my uncle and his generation went through to the young people of today, then the makers of games like this can feel justifiably proud of themselves.

Jon Pritchard

THE ART OF WAR #2

My great grandfather died at Paschendale in 1917 and my grandfather was shell-shocked at Dunkirk in 1940. I'm grateful, therefore, that my generation has been spared the kind of general call to arms and self-sacrifice in the name of freedom which our forefathers made on our behalf during those two great conflicts.

Nevertheless, for one brought up on *Victor and Battle*, the subject of war has always fascinated me. I want to know what war is like without actually having to go through it myself. *Hidden & Dangerous* and *Medal Of Honor* were superb, but I can honestly say that playing *Call Of Duty* has been the most profound gaming experience of my life. Nothing comes close to it in intensity and grittiness. The missions are perfectly crafted,

and I'll admit there was a tear in my eye when I approached the end of the Pegasus Bridge level and the game's eloquent music stirred into action.

In that moment, I understood a little better just what those brave men achieved and what sacrifice they made in June 1944. It's a rare and precious thing when a game manages to achieve this.

Dr Julian Scott

ALKA SELTZER

I don't know if you've ever experienced a 'good game hangover'. It's when you finish a bloody good game and then just can't get into any other games for a few weeks afterwards. I first noticed it after *System Shock 2*, and then again after *Fallout* and *Deus Ex*. I always thought it was a sign of just how good a game was – anything else seems a bit flat and uninvolved.

I've just played *Max Payne 2*, followed by *Call Of Duty* and I'm now into *KOTOR*. My hangover is going to last for ages after these buggers – and there's still *Deus Ex 2*, *Half-Life 2*, *Stalker* and so on to come. Has there ever been a better time to be a PC game player?

Tony Morris

Never, ever.

WRITE IN AND WIN A SOUNDCARD. WE CAN'T SAY FAIRER THAN THAT, CAN WE?

MAILBOX, PC ZONE, 9 DALLINGTON ST, LONDON EC1V 0BQ, OR EMAIL LETTERS@PCZONE.CO.UK

WIN!
A TOP
SOUND
CARD

■ The Letter of the Month wins a spanking new soundcard, courtesy of the lovely people at Creative Labs. The Audigy 2 Platinum has been firmly ensconced in our Buyer's Guide since its release, and is one of the best cards you can currently buy.



Call Of Duty: the closest you'll get to World War II without a time machine.

"Americans can't hit shit, get frustrated and download hacks"

JASON HANSCOMB, THE VOICE OF DIPLOMACY

NO FIREARMS

What's up? Every time I open your magazine I see just about every *Half-Life* mod covered and reviewed, all except for one: *Firearms* (the one that's in the top five *Half-Life* mods). Do you guys have some grudge against it? It's now at version 2.8, which I think is the best version to date, and I don't think you've touched it for about a year and a half.

Chris

No grudge Chris, but we admit we might have neglected it a bit of late. Expect a review next issue and accept an apology for our tardiness.

SHORT ARSE

I was reading your recent letters on games getting shorter and agree completely, but there's a



Is *PES3* the greatest game of all time? Grab yourself a PS2 adaptor and pad and find out for yourself.

good explanation for this – the Americans. If you have a long game, Americans lose interest really quickly and thus sales of the game will drop. It's the same with *Counter-Strike* too:

Americans can't hit shit, get frustrated and download hacks.

Jason Hanscomb

You're a big fan of President Bush as well, I presume?

PES PAD

After reading Steve Hill's fantastic review of *PES3*, I feel like I have to go out and buy the game, but where can I find a PS2 pad adaptor? I'm a big fan of the *Pro Evolution* range, but I've always been put off buying it on the PC because the gamepads are shit. A PS2 pad adaptor and pad would be my saviour, but where can I get one?

Andy

If it's a PS2 USB adaptor you're after, just head over to www.specialreserve.com where you can buy this priceless accessory and experience gaming joy.

GO TO JAIL

I have an idea – why not make it illegal to create a rubbish game? When I say illegal, I don't mean, 'sorry mate, you made a crap game, you're going to jail'. Rather, games should have to pass an approval system instead. I hate it when you spend your hard-earned cash on a £25 game that you regret buying immediately – especially if you do a paper round that earns you about seven quid a week.

I'm not trying to be very negative, nor am I just in a bad mood, but it's got to be said. I've had enough of vile games and they need to be stopped. I would rather wait for an excellent game than play a rushed crap one.

Keith

I kinda like the jail idea, which would leave us as judge, jury and executioner.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

INVISIBLE FLAW

I read your review of *Deus Ex* and thought it was absolutely spot-on – I couldn't wait for the UK release so got my mate in the US to send me a copy. The game is superb, something you acknowledge in your review, but it's just not the great leap forward I was hoping for, or as groundbreaking as the original which is still one of my favourite games.

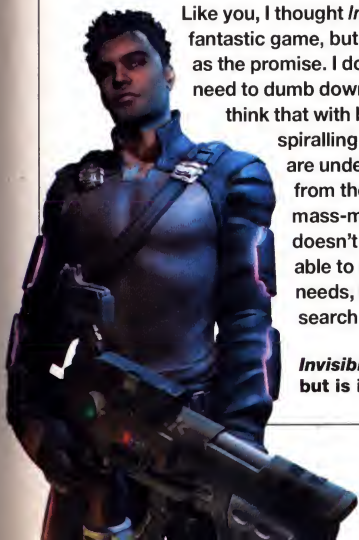
The big problem, as I see it, is that Warren Spector is one of the few originators in the games industry and if he's dumbing down games, either for console users or for a more mass-market audience, what hope have we got for the future?

I've always played games on the PC because I'm what you'd class as a hardcore gamer. I want games that are in-depth, I want to be immersed in a believable fantasy world and I want a challenge. With all this talk about realistic physics in games, I thought things were going to get better – but with the release of *Invisible War*, I'm extremely concerned. What's your take on the current situation?

Phil Hibbard

Like you, I thought *Invisible War* was a fantastic game, but it didn't deliver as much as the promise. I don't think you necessarily need to dumb down for consoles, but I do think that with budgets for games spiralling ever upwards, developers are under pressure to move away from the niche and into a more mass-market-friendly area. That doesn't mean that you won't be able to satisfy your hardcore needs, but you might have to search a bit harder for your kicks.

Invisible War – a great game, but is it a worthy sequel?



BACKCHAT

THE BEST OF THE CHAT FROM THE PC ZONE FORUM THIS MONTH. GET INVOLVED AT WWW.PCZONE.CO.UK

In this month's shocking Special Report – see page 12 – we reveal the truth about advertising in games. But what do you think? Modern-day scourge or financial saviour?

Over to **DarthMorbus**: "There are both advantages and disadvantages. The major up is the input of cash into the industry, but it could stifle creativity. I can't think of a company who would want its product to be seen in a bad light – can you imagine Coca-Cola being happy with someone using a truck with their logo on to run over an old woman?" Well let's face it, it'd be an improvement on Blue.

Darrenmdr can also see the benefits for the right sort of product placement. "Some games look more realistic when they have adverts in, like sports games, and I can't see them stifling creativity. There would be a queue of advertisers willing to have hoardings put up around, say, a virtual city in *Grand Theft Auto*."

Graham123 agrees: "I seem to recall people getting a bit uptight about the placement of Red Bull in *Dredd Vs Death*, but I can't see the problem. It wasn't exactly being shoved in your face, it was just another part of the scenery."

Escaped_monkey went one step further. Far from being an evil, he claims advertising is what gamers really, really want. "It's obvious there's a desire for real brand names in games like *GTA* – just look at the some of the mods that replace the pizza shops with McDonald's, and the gas station with a Shell station." He also reckons that in time, advertising could help bring the cost of games down. "The money earned from the advertising should be taken off the price of the game, so you could buy *Call Of Duty* for £30, or *Call Of Duty* sponsored by Coca-Cola for £20."

And the love-in continued with **zacmad**: "I've got nothing against advertising as long as it doesn't interfere with the game – like a logo that appears on a loading screen. If that can keep the price of games down, then it's a good thing." And finally over to **Bagsabbis**, who doesn't see what all the fuss is about. "Remember, product placement happens every day in the movies and nobody complains about that." He's got a point there.



If *PC ZONE* sponsored *GTA: Vice City*.

MARACAS

I think I've spotted a gap in the market. All my console-owning friends have a great time sat in front of the TV, all playing their shooting, fighting and driving games in a party atmosphere. But what can we do on our PCs? Play over the Internet against faceless enemies around world? It's not the same is it...

So why don't we get any party games? Where are all our dancemat games? Or maraca games? We've all got USB ports now and can support multiple

gamepads. What about games that take advantage of this?

Come on *PC ZONE*, you've got to bite the bullet. Or are you secretly hoarding all the fun games for yourselves?

Colin Knight

The sad fact is that most party games are reserved for the console kids and their party hardware. We're not completely neglected though – we tracked down a PC dancemat and reviewed it just for you – see page 113 and party hard! Dude. [X]

THE PCZONE A-LIST

◀ SHOOTERS ▶

CALL OF DUTY



Quite simply the greatest shooter currently on the market, *Call Of Duty* is like the tour-de-force Omaha beach level of *Allied Assault*, stretched out over an entire game. Never before has war felt so real, the player felt so helpless and comrades felt so human. Constantly managing to mix up feelings of dread, fear, excitement and exhilaration within you, there is no greater WWII experience than this.

PUB Activision **DEV** Infinity Ward
PCZ ISSUE: 136

◀ STRATEGY ▶

MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR



A sequel to the stunning *Shogun: Total War* (now available on budget), *Medieval* offers everything its predecessor did and a whole lot more. Adding to the massive 3D battles and turn-based *Risk*-style strategy map are a multitude of new options, both diplomatic and military. Breathtaking in every way, strategy games just don't come any better than this.

PUB Activision
DEV Creative Assembly
PCZ ISSUE: 120



MAX PAYNE 2

It's Payne! Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense and well-designed that you just won't care.

PUB Rockstar Games **DEV** Remedy **PCZ ISSUE:** 136

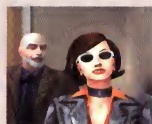


MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

It may have been toppled by *Call Of Duty*, but *Allied Assault*'s set-pieces, period detail and intense action can still beat most recent FPS releases hands-down. Its graphics may be ageing slightly these days, but it's still a hell of a ride.

PUB EA **DEV** 2015

PCZ ISSUE: 112



NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

Style, stealth and magnificent set-pieces are the order of the day in this excellent spy sequel. It looks brilliant, it's well designed and genuinely funny – and it doesn't treat you like an idiot.

PUB Black Label Games **DEV** Monolith **PCZ ISSUE:** 122



HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS

Unchallenged for three years, *Half-Life* redefined its genre with a cracking atmosphere and a compelling plot. It now comes bundled with the excellent *Opposing Force* add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, *Counter-Strike*.

PUB Vivendi **DEV** Valve Software **PCZ ISSUE:** 71



UNREAL II

In terms of visuals, this is the absolute pinnacle in the world of the FPS. What's more, the arsenal of weaponry at your disposal is imaginative and satisfying to wield, while the sound effects, music and voice acting all exude quality too.

PUB Atari **DEV** Legend Entertainment **PCZ ISSUE:** 126



MAFIA

From the makers of *Hidden & Dangerous* and just as compelling, this game borrows from every great gangster film ever made. Tense missions, superb atmosphere and great AI – it's a classic in every respect. Badabing!

PUB Take 2 **DEV** Illusion **PCZ ISSUE:** 119



JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY

The latest saber-em-up from the Lucas stable is an absolute winner; think fights with Boba Fett, double-ended light sabers, customisable characters and even the opportunity to turn to the Dark Side. Ace.

PUB Activision **DEV** Raven **PCZ ISSUE:** 133



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003

Not a million miles away from the last *UT* title, *UT2003* does however make leaps and bounds graphically. With finely balanced weapons, smart bots and diverse maps it's the reigning king of speed fragging.

PUB Atari **DEV** Digital Extremes **PCZ ISSUE:** 122



HALO

After two years, the Xbox masterpiece has come home to the PC. It may be visually long in the tooth, but its exceptional multiplayer mayhem, superb vehicles and solid solo missions puts it squarely in our hall of fame.

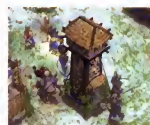
PUB Microsoft **DEV** Bungie/Gearbox **PCZ ISSUE:** 135



RISE OF NATIONS

One of the most addictive and satisfying strategy games to land on our desks in ages. Its unique perspective, great gameplay and all-round freshness make *Rise Of Nations* a title worthy of our prestigious Classic award.

PUB Microsoft **DEV** Big Huge Games **PCZ ISSUE:** 129



AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

The *Age Of* series goes 3D in Ensemble Studios' best strategy outing to date. Great gameplay, superb attention to detail and a strong storyline give this an unparalleled sense of atmosphere, plus it includes a decent map editor.

PUB Microsoft **DEV** Ensemble Studios **PCZ ISSUE:** 123



REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION

This highly original take on the machinations of political upheaval in Eastern Europe has split gaming opinion down the middle, but we think it's a fascinating, educating and unique piece of gaming history.

PUB Eidos Interactive **DEV** Elixir Studios **PCZ ISSUE:** 132



WARRIOR KINGS: BATTLES

Warrior Kings was one of the most compelling and diverse RTS games we'd seen. This second chapter, which focuses around skirmish play, offers more units, varied tech trees and challenging AI generals.

PUB Empire Interactive **DEV** Black Cactus **PCZ ISSUE:** 128



EMPIRES: DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD

The latest to fall off the *Age Of Empires* lorry may not innovate, but there's a good variety of nations with accurate historical spins (General Patton, Richard the Lionheart etc), as well as novel unit types and well-written campaigns.

PUB Activision **DEV** Stainless Steel Studios **PCZ ISSUE:** 135



COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS

The C&C series comes of age in this 3D orgy of scud missiles, daisy-cutter bombs and nuclear strikes. *Generals* is a superb-looking game with well-designed sides that offers fun in spades.

PUB EA **DEV** EA Pacific/Westwood **PCZ ISSUE:** 127



COMMANDOS 2

There have been a few imitators of the squad-based strategy of *Commandos* but none have come close to this sequel. If, like us, you loved the first game, you'll love this massive, preposterously detailed follow-up even more.

PUB Eidos **DEV** Pyro Studio **PCZ ISSUE:** 108



HOMEWORLD 2

The interface to this epic space combat RTS might be a bit intimidating for rookies, but *Homeworld 2* definitely deserves a place in our hall of fame. Staggering visuals and gripping strategic manoeuvring make it addictive.

PUB VU Games **DEV** Relic **PCZ ISSUE:** 134



WARCRAFT III

While not a huge departure from the original, *Warcraft III* is an extremely enjoyable and polished package. The storyline is brilliant and the multiplayer action dangerously addictive. Simple, solid entertainment.

PUB VU Games **DEV** Blizzard **PCZ ISSUE:** 119

Welcome to the **PC ZONE A-List**, the definitive buyer's guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages aren't just good, they're the best of the best in their respective genres, and our list is continually updated to show how each game stands in relation to its peers

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

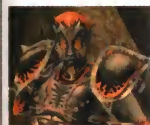


NEW ENTRY The best RPG to appear for five whole years, and the best *Star Wars* game to surface in ten. *Knights of the Old Republic* manages to develop the franchise more than even Lucas's cinematic efforts ever could. With beautiful graphics, a gripping plot, oodles of Force powers and supreme character development, this is proof, if ever it were needed, that Bioware is one of the best developing houses on the planet.
PUB: Activision **DEV:** Bioware
PCZ ISSUE 137



DEUS EX

Great sci-fi plot, amazing attention to detail and unparalleled player freedom: combining the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief*, *Deus Ex* is an RPG of complex beauty and a true revolution in computer gaming.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 93



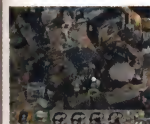
THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

One of the most impressive RPGs we've seen in years. A massively open-ended world full of beautiful visuals, superb depth of gameplay and innovative character development make this a classic that will keep you totally absorbed.
PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Bethesda Softworks
PCZ ISSUE 117



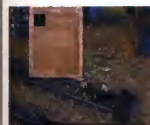
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

The makers of the epic *Baldur's Gate* series prove they're still a leading force in the world of RPGs with this glorious hardcore 3D adventure. It features great single and multiplayer options, along with a very accessible toolkit.
PUB Atari **DEV** Bioware
PCZ ISSUE 118



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

An incredible game from Black Isle, using the *Baldur's Gate* engine. With a compelling story, well-scripted dialogue and the best character development we've seen in any game of its kind, this is a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG.
PUB Interplay **DEV** Black Isle Studio
PCZ ISSUE 87



DUNGEON SIEGE

Graphically brilliant, massively enjoyable and highly immersive, *Dungeon Siege* is one of the best RPGs to date and only misses out on a Classic because of the shortcomings in the narrative.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** Gas Powered Games
PCZ ISSUE 115



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

Definitely one of the most original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it with the lights off if you're hard enough.
PUB EA **DEV** Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 80



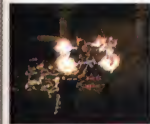
BALDUR'S GATE II

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. The sequel isn't vastly different, but it's bigger, better and still extremely addictive. An essential for anyone interested in PC role-playing.
PUB Interplay **DEV** Bioware
PCZ ISSUE 96



DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

NEW ENTRY It's had most of its role-playing elements sucked out and developed a strong console bias, but the gripping plot and action remain intact. It wasn't the revolution we wanted, but it's still a worthwhile purchase.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 137



DIVINE DIVINITY

This epic RPG contains the action of *Diablo II* combined with the storyline of the *Baldur's Gate* series, not to mention about 200 hours of gameplay in a huge fantasy world. The name may be a bit silly, but the gameplay certainly isn't.
PUB CDV **DEV** Larian Studios
PCZ ISSUE 121

ACTION/ADVENTURE

SPLINTER CELL



At long last we've got a new king of the action adventures with the Tom Clancy-influenced *Splinter Cell*, and a new crown prince of stealth in the form of the über-flexible Sam Fisher. *Splinter Cell* features the perfect blend of action, structure and pace, combined with some of the best visuals and set pieces around. No self-respecting gamer should miss out on this.

PUB Ubisoft
DEV Ubisoft Montreal

PCZ ISSUE 125



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

The fluidity, ingenuity and graphical splendour of *The Sands Of Time* cannot be faulted. Combat may be unsatisfying, but the time-control gimmicks and fast-paced acrobatics put Lara to shame.

PUB Ubisoft **DEV** Ubisoft Montreal

PCZ ISSUE 136



GRIM FANDANGO

If you've followed LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must. The scripting is impeccable, while sublime graphics and brilliant humour ensure it's top of its genre.

PUB Activision **DEV** LucasArts

PCZ ISSUE 71



SILENT HILL 2: DIRECTOR'S CUT

Survival horror games have truly come of age with this superbly creepy and atmospheric offering. The (near identical) third game is also out, but for our money this is still the champ. Classy and disturbing.

PUB Konami **DEV** Konami

PCZ ISSUE 126



METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE

A convincing PC conversion that adds tanker-loads of side-missions, training stages and unlockable characters to the PS2 original. There's too much waffle, but it's still an excellent third-person sneakfest.

PUB Konami **DEV** Konami

PCZ ISSUE 127



SOUL REAVER 2

While this latest episode in the saga of Raziel takes few risks with the action/adventure formula, it's a consummately constructed example of the genre. Compelling storyline, satisfying combat and excellent puzzle dynamics.

PUB Eidos **DEV** Crystal Dynamics

PCZ ISSUE 111



DISCWORD NOIR

Although the point-and-click adventure game is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and in our opinion, all the better for it.

PUB Atari **DEV** Perfect Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 79



THE THING

Drawing on some brilliant raw material from John Carpenter's classic horror movie, this survival action horror picks up the story where the film left off. It's one of the best film spin-offs around, with tense atmosphere and good gameplay.

PUB Black Label Games **DEV** Computer Artworks

PCZ ISSUE 121



BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

It has its detractors, but nobody can deny that the third *Broken Sword* game seamlessly reinvents the traditional point-and-click into the realm of 3D. The dialogue may grate, but it's still well worth a look.

PUB THQ **DEV** Revolution

PCZ ISSUE 136



PRISONER OF WAR

One of the most original games available with a light-hearted setting and an atmospheric soundtrack, which makes it more of an adventure than an action title. *POW* makes a refreshing change from the usual mass-slaughter fare.

PUB THQ **DEV** Revolution

PCZ ISSUE 121

◀ GOD GAMES ▶

BLACK & WHITE



Although it had its critics, we still stand by our original verdict. Peter Molyneux's vision is pure and the design of the game breaks boundaries and serves as a blueprint for the future. The add-on *Creature Isle* is also available, which cuts down on micro-management and enables you to guide your creature through a variety of mini-games. Pure genius in a box.

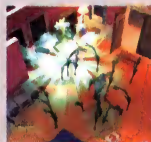
PUB EA DEV Lionhead Studios
PCZ ISSUE 100



CIVILIZATION III

Civilization III sticks to the same compulsive gameplay that made the first two games so popular. Die-hard Civ fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while the new user-friendly interface makes the game accessible to the first-timer. Brings to mind the maxim 'if it ain't broke...'

PUB Atari DEV Firaxis Games
PCZ ISSUE 111



GHOST MASTER

Take your team of ghosts into the town of Gravenille and solve some otherworldly problems, scare a few mortals and bag yourself some new team-mates in this innovative spook 'em up that's one of the freshest and funniest games we've seen for a long time.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Sick Puppies
PCZ ISSUE 130



THE SIMS

Revolutionary at birth, the concept has since been diluted through numerous add-ons and an unhealthy long stay in the charts. It's now little more than a cash cow for Electronic Arts, although you can't help but admire the strength of community and the fact that it's still selling by the bucket-load.

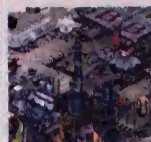
PUB EA DEV Maxis/EA
PCZ ISSUE 87



VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG

An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of Vegas itself, *Make It Big* provides hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that let you suck the money out of punters' pockets. It can get a little too fiddly, but it looks and plays really well. A *PC ZONE* 'Essential'.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Deep Red
PCZ ISSUE 135



SPACE COLONY

Whether you're trying to attract space-tourists or battle neighbouring aliens, taking control of 20 rowdy space colonists and pandering to them makes for a charming and original management jaunt, with plenty of missions to keep you going.

PUB Gathering DEV Firefly Studios
PCZ ISSUE 136



CAESAR III

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens by balancing their work, health and entertainment needs. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.

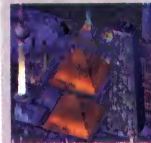
PUB VU Games DEV Impressions
PCZ ISSUE 70



EMPEROR: RISE OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

This intricate game comes from the same stable as *Zeus* and *Caesar* – and they know a thing or two about city building. There's a massive amount of gameplay and more than 50 missions spanning seven historic campaigns. As well as the economic considerations, you'll have to follow feng shui and the Chinese zodiac.

PUB VU Games DEV Breakaway Games
PCZ ISSUE 121



SIM CITY 4

The latest outing of the best-selling city-building sim goes 3D. Unfortunately, there are no huge leaps forwards in gameplay, but there are plenty of features, such as regional cities, imported characters from *The Sims* and a terrain editor to keep you occupied.

PUB EA DEV Maxis
PCZ ISSUE 125



DUNGEON KEEPER 2

The ultimate 'it's good to be bad' game, *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea and *DK2* takes the essence and humour of the original, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and adds a myriad of new features that build wisely on the original concept.

PUB EA DEV Bullfrog
PCZ ISSUE 79

▶ FLIGHT SIMS ◀

IL-2: FORGOTTEN BATTLES



Much of what has been improved with this sequel to *IL-2 Sturmovik* has been done under the virtual bonnet of the game. *IL-2: Forgotten Battles* features improved AI, more accurate flight models and more of a realistic overall experience, plus more campaigns and even more planes. All of this adds up to an exhilarating flying experience. Put simply, we think *IL-2: Forgotten Battles* is one of the finest flight sims ever to grace our screens.

PUB Ubisoft DEV 1C: Maddox Games

PCZ ISSUE 128



MS FLIGHT SIM 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT

Another dose of sheer authentic aerial quality from the bods at Microsoft, with revamped weather systems, a beefed-up terrain generator and loads of historical planes for you to career around in.

PUB Microsoft DEV Microsoft
PCZ ISSUE 133



BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, the skies are crowded and the flight models actually feel 'right'. Tally ho!

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Rowan Software
PCZ ISSUE 103



SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY NEW ENTRY

A flight sim with a strong emphasis on fun, rather than flaps, navigation and perfect landings. If you want some intense arcade action with an engaging console-style reward system, look no further.

PUB Activision DEV Lucasarts
PCZ ISSUE 137



B-17: THE MIGHTY 8TH

B-17 reproduces the experience of piloting a World War II bomber. Just about everything is covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks everywhere.

PUB Atari DEV Wayward Simulations
PCZ ISSUE 96

▶ MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ◀

EVERQUEST



EverQuest keeps going from strength to strength and now has a total of five expansion packs. One of the best of these, *Planes Of Power*, provides a multitude of simplifications to help newcomers, while adding lots of new worlds for high-level characters to explore. It's a truly beautiful and captivating game that has claimed the souls and social lives of thousands of people the world over.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Sony Online Entertainment

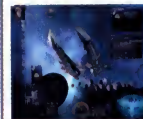
PCZ ISSUE 117



PLANETSIDE

Truly the mother of online battles, *Planetside* is a never-ending war among three armies and waged across several continents. Superb squad battles, stunning vehicles and atmospheric visuals make for a remarkably immersive experience.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Sony Online Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 131



EVE ONLINE

Eve Online is as beautiful as it is complex, oozing style from every pixel. Choose from four unique races and explore the *Eve* universe with its unparalleled scope for adventure, interaction and trade.

PUB Crucial DEV CCP
PCZ ISSUE 130



ANARCHY ONLINE

A beautiful MMOG with detailed environments and a huge selection of armour and weapons, which all add up to make an immersive title. Many of the bugs have been ironed out and the latest update offers a slick gaming experience.

PUB Funcom DEV Funcom
PCZ ISSUE 114



A TALE IN THE DESERT

No guns, no death, just the peaceful rolling dunes of ancient Egypt. This bizarre, yet beautiful MMOG sees you attempting to build a utopian society, farming camels and progressing through the seven tests of man.

PUB eGenesis DEV eGenesis
PCZ ISSUE 133

MULTIPLAYER MODS ▶

COUNTER-STRIKE (HALF-LIFE)



Despite the troubled single-player release, it seems that *Counter-Strike* will always be the mod that rules the Earth. The popularity of this terrorist versus counter-terrorist mod shows no sign of abating, and there are few PC gamers who don't have a mental map of the troublespots of *de_dust*. At one point there were more CS servers than every other online game put together, and it isn't going to leave us any time soon.

WEB www.counter-strike.net

THE SPECIALISTS

Blending *Half-Life* Team Deathmatch with kung-fu, slo-mo gymnastics make this a must-play mod. With a range of maps and *Matrix*-esque bullet trails, it provides a nice break from the über-realism of *Counter-Strike*.

WEB www.specialistsmod.net

DESERT COMBAT (BF 1942)

This *Battlefield 1942* TC focuses on desert-based conflicts from the last decade, playing through scraps like the original Desert Storm and the troubles in Somalia. It's extraordinarily popular, and really rather good.

WEB www.desertcombat.com

NATURAL SELECTION (HALF-LIFE)

This superb *Half-Life* mod sees marines squaring off against the aliens in various sci-fi environments. With the marines working in teams and the aliens acting like mentalists, the variety in gameplay makes this a sure-fire winner.

WEB www.natural-selection.org

DAY OF DEFEAT (HALF-LIFE)

This atmospheric, highly realistic and superbly designed *Half-Life* mod covers various battles from deep within WWII. Its different character classes and superb arsenal of weapons add to authenticity, fun and general carnage.

WEB www.dayofdefeatmod.com

3D ACTION / STRATEGY ▶

OPERATION FLASHPOINT GOLD



Now available with the tricky *Red Hammer* add-on, *Flashpoint* has become to tactical action what *Half-Life* was to shooters. Fight on foot or in tanks, fly planes or even direct an entire platoon, this game is total war – in your face and on a massive scale. The graphics are an acquired taste, but they convey a sense of wide-open warfare perfectly. It's the ultimate military simulation, with a stunning atmosphere and superb missions.

PUB Codemasters DEV Bohemia Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 104

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

With a real *Boy's Own*-feel, a ninja-bastard difficulty rating and the same superb engine as *Mafia*, *H&D 2* is one of the finest squad-based tactical shooters around. It's got a few bugs, but is still an essential purchase.

PUB Gathering DEV Illusion Softworks

PCZ ISSUE 136

RAINBOW SIX: RAVEN SHIELD

All the style and presentation you would expect from a Tom Clancy game, from the realism of the weapons down to footprints in the snow. A tactical and atmospheric game that can be frustratingly tricky at times.

PUB Ubisoft DEV Ubisoft Montreal

PCZ ISSUE 127

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS: DELUXE

This revamp of *H&D* removes all of the infamous bugs from the original, as well as including three extra campaigns. There's been a lot of work put in to improving the graphics and modding fans will relish the new editor that ships with this edition.

PUB Take 2 DEV Illusion Softworks

PCZ ISSUE 115

HOSTILE WATERS

A brilliant RTS/action game you can play purely strategically or up close and personal. Inspired by the 16-bit classic *Carrier Command*, it's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options.

PUB Rage DEV Rage Software

PCZ ISSUE 101

DRIVING GAMES ▶

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY



PS2 owners will finally stop gloating when they see *Vice City*'s glorious PC incarnation. *GTA3* was an incredible crim-sim; so incredible that it was hard to see how it could be improved, but the freedom and variety of its follow-up is blinding. Whether it's carrying out its remarkably inventive law-breaking missions or just shooting pedestrians, *Vice City* is about as close to gaming perfection as you can get.

PUB Rockstar Games DEV Rockstar North

PCZ ISSUE 131

GRAND THEFT AUTO III

It may have been overshadowed by its younger brother, but *Grand Theft Auto III* remains as awesome as it ever was. It's a great spin on both driving and shooting genres and you'll still love its noisy orgy of violence and speed.

PUB Rockstar Games DEV Rockstar North

PCZ ISSUE 117

COLIN MCRAE 3

Featuring some of the best handling we've ever seen, as well as an excellent new career mode, *Colin McRae 3* is a must-have racer. Driving conditions are realistic, the tracks are varied and the detail overwhelming.

PUB Codemasters DEV Codemasters

PCZ ISSUE 131

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

NEW ENTRY Illegal street racing, jazzed-up supercars and such a strong sense of speed that you yelp when you turn corners. *Underground* is a superbly designed and extraordinarily pretty tonic for testosterone-addled speed freaks.

PUB EA DEV Black Box

PCZ ISSUE 137

GRAND PRIX 4

You won't find a more accurate racing sim. Graphically lush and full of anal detail, Geoff Crammond's latest effort offers in-depth telemetry and a staggering number of options. *Grand Prix 4* is leading the grid in the world of racing sims.

PUB Atari DEV Simergy

PCZ ISSUE 119

SPORT ▶

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 4: SEASON 03/04



NEW ENTRY A fresh season is added to the *CM4* canon, along with a variety of nips and tucks to smooth out the gameplay. The top-down match engine that enables you to watch how your players are performing still works like an absolute dream. The ongoing financial crises plaguing football means that playing the transfer market is a struggle, but the game is still as life-sappingly addictive as it ever was.

PUB Eidos DEV Sports Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 137

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

Our guilty console secret has landed on the PC, and it's as good as we hoped. Better than *FIFA* in every conceivable way (bar the official license of course), there is no greater footie experience available.

PUB Konami DEV Konami

PCZ ISSUE 136

VIRTUA TENNIS

Who would have believed that this console favourite would translate so well to the PC? Its control interface is supremely intuitive, while the AI is massively challenging. Best of all, though, are its truly sublime multiplayer options.

PUB Empire Interactive DEV Hitmaker/Strangelite

PCZ ISSUE 114

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

This third edition of Tony Hawk's classic skateboarding game is an absolute joy to play. It features enormous levels, more interaction than ever before and a totally kick-ass soundtrack.

PUB Activision DEV Neversoft Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 98

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

Each *Tiger* game seems to be getting progressively easier, but this latest effort is eminently playable. With superb graphical touches, an immersive career mode and courses that feel 'alive', it's difficult to put down.

PUB EA Sports DEV Headgate Studios

PCZ ISSUE 135

DISC PAGES

WORDS & DISCS Suzy Wallace

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline on 08700 711482. The line is open weekdays between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, or email pc_zone@interchange.co.uk. **BEFORE YOU DIAL...**

If you're calling the helpline:

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, soundcard, RAM and so on, along with the nature of the fault.
- Have a pen and paper to hand so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

■ To run the software on these discs, you need at least a PIII 600MHz or equivalent, with a GeForce 2MX 32MB graphics card and 128MB RAM (256MB recommended for Windows XP users).

DISCLAIMER

■ This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it's always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.

■ Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

ARMED & DANGEROUS

CD1/DVD Pub: Activision Dev: Planet Moon Studios

You know it's no ordinary game when the main players are a gung-ho cockney freedom fighter, a genteel yet ultra-violent robot, a goblin-like madman and a mole engineer with a penchant for TNT. These are the stars of *Armed & Dangerous*, and they give you some idea of the humour in this third-person shooter from the people that brought you the fantastically underrated action strategy game *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*.

The first level of our exclusive demo is set in an ice-laden outpost with two targets to achieve – retrieve some bombs from the pub and blow up some gates. Though to be honest, these are just excuses for running through the level blowing everything sky-high. Don't forget to destroy the big red sirens along the way too, or the enemies will keep coming at you forever.

The second level is a slightly more complex affair, asking you to off a few master snipers before rescuing a lamb (stop sniggering). Don't think this is going to be easy mind, as you're assaulted on all sides by enemies, snipers, gun emplacements and flying airships. Look out

for precariously balanced boulders to drop on people's heads too.

When you're in the game, use the Q and tab button to cycle between your main weapons and secondary ones respectively (see box below). Animals (penguins or sheep) can come in handy as well – throw a sticky mine at them and they turn and run, straight into the midst of your enemies and then BOOM! Instant kebab.

DOUBLE-TROUBLE!

The PC ZONE DVD is now double-sided, which means you get twice as much content as before. If you can't find what you're looking for on the DVD, close the PC ZONE disc browser and turn the disc over



Penguins prove a great help in exploding enemies.



The Gurner weapon is Saddam's new choice for mass destruction. Or at least, it was...

UP THE ARSENAL – IS THIS THE BEST COLLECTION OF WEAPONS EVER?



Land Shark Gun

You can only carry one shot at a time, but when fired, an ominous looking fin starts to 'swim' around the ground. It then heads for a target, breaching the surface and swallowing the unfortunate grunt in one.



Vindaloo Rocket Launcher

A homing device that fires two rockets, although you can get an upgrade that boosts your quota to four. We're not sure what the vindaloo connection is – maybe the developers are partial to a curry?



Topsy-Turvy

Once fired, watch as Roman screws this device into the ground, then hangs on as the screen inverts and enemies fall. Once they're gone, the screen goes back the right way & the baddies crash back to earth. Class.



UNREAL II EXTENDED MULTIPLAYER

CD1/DVD Pub: Atari Dev: Epic

Unreal II was eagerly awaited by many fans – and although the graphics blew us away, the lack of a multiplayer mode rightly left many gamers feeling cold. In a rare move for a developer, Epic has actually taken notice of the upset it caused and has now produced an official add-on to *Unreal II* – *XMP*. This add-on is free to any *Unreal II* owners and will be boxed with new copies of *Unreal II*.

XMP CHARACTER CLASSES

MAKE YOUR CHOICE FROM THREE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHARACTER



Ranger

The Ranger is a sniper/medic/scout with light armour, weapons and healing ability. He's the only one who can heal & drop med-packs and is fastest of the three classes. Weapons – 'Widowmaker' sniper rifle, pistol, Shock Lance, smoke and frag grenade launcher.



Tech

The Tech is a specialist in hacking, equipment and vehicles. With medium armour and weapons, he can also repair team-mates' shields and place force walls and turrets. Weapons – Shotgun, Combat Assault Rifle, EMP and toxic grenade launcher.



Gunner

The Gunner is the *XMP* tank. Heavy armour and weapons, he's slow, with powerful weapons. Gunners can give ammunition and inventory & place landmines and laser-triggered mines. Weapons – flame thrower, rocket launcher, whiteout & incendiary grenade launcher.

But what an expansion it is! There's only one game mode, but it's a completely new vehicle-based twist on CTF, and we just can't stop playing it in the PC ZONE office. *XMP* is a class-based affair, the objective being to retrieve two enemy artefacts and return them to your base, while defending (and if necessary retrieving) two artefacts of your own.

However, there's more to it all than just that... Dotted around the huge and beautiful terrain-based maps are vehicles, gun turrets, power supplies and deployment points. Both vehicles and gun turrets require power to run them, while the power supplies and deployment points are hackable, meaning

that the game takes more of a tactical turn.

As well as this, the three classes make a huge difference to your abilities and weapon loadout, with the choice of ranger, tech or gunner (see box, left, for more). There have also been some welcome additions to movement – you can sprint by pressing shift (although it's limited by a stamina bar), double-jump with a boost-pack and even propel yourself around with the flamethrower on low-grav levels.

Vehicles range from buggies that come equipped with people-mashing blades at the front, to heavy-duty tanks with flame-throwers and manned heavy guns. Some vehicles can



The new jetpack comes in handy.

even carry up to three people, with one driving and the other two manning the turrets.

All in all, these extra features mean that *Unreal II: XMP* is a much more tactical affair than most multiplayer FPSs. It also means that games are generally best played on a busy server, with anything less than six people being fairly pointless.

The standalone demo (on both the CD and DVD) features the Garden level which offers superb opportunities for teamwork, while the full version (if you own the full game) can be found on the DVD.

The full version has eight maps to satisfy your shooting needs, from sand-swept desert to a low-gravity asteroid belt.



Cunning stunts! A vehicle stunt park comes included.



Pretty in pink.



BREED

CD2/DVD Pub: CDV Dev: Brat Designs



Your iron-clad steed awaits...

Desperate battles against aliens – who can resist them? Certainly not *Breed*, which pitches you and your comrades against a nasty race that's occupied the Earth and left you struggling to wrest it back. After watching the long intro movie, you start off in a spaceship with a time limit, within which you must drive a tank into your dropship and then fly the

thing out. Try not to get stuck on the scenery as this is an annoying way of dying and you'll be forced to watch the intro movie again.

Once safely off the main ship, head your dropship towards the planet, after which you'll start to see some action. Once you've broken through the atmosphere, several enemy fighters swarm towards you. Homing missiles are the best bet for this dogfight, but be sure to stay as clear of the island as possible, as the SAM silos on land are unerringly



The tank section is complete carnage.

accurate. Backspace cycles through your targets, while pressing Control switches between land-based and air-based targets, so be sure to take these out before you land.

Once you're on solid land, drive the tank out and annihilate the ground forces – easily the best part of the demo. Your comrades arm the weapons and you're in control of the main gun – and although it's limited in ammo, it's a true force to be reckoned with. After a while, you'll be forced to abandon your tank and continue on foot. Good luck.



Generic alien stereotype at 12 o'clock!



Damsel in distress – it's a classic fairytale.

FIRESTARTER

CD1/DVD Pub: TBC Dev: GSC Game World

If you're looking for a fast, fun first-person shooter to annihilate your work colleagues on, *FireStarter* is a great place to start. Unfortunately, the multiplayer mode only supports LAN-play, so there'll be no Internet mayhem. The game requires Windows 2000/XP.

The single-player mode restrains you to certain areas of

the map, while you take out the oncoming monsters. Once each area has been cleared, the next is opened up and you can advance for some more computer-enhanced red mist.

If you like your FPSs bloody, then you'll love *FireStarter*, with huge great fountains of blood erupting from your unfortunate victims.



The circular saw – what better weapon?



Korda: all dressed up and nowhere to go.

SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY

CD2/DVD Pub: Activision **Dev:** Totally Games **Reviewed:** Issue 137, 80%

Chocks away – Activision's WWII arcade flight-shooter dive-bombs on to your screen. Featuring a tutorial that lets you get to grips with the flying controls (and one which teaches you the basics of how to bomb Germans), you should have this flying lark well in hand before you attempt the first mission.

Which is lucky, as you'll soon be up against dive-bombing Stukas, dog-fighting ME109s and bullet-dodging convoys. The sub-missions see you completing tasks as diverse as protecting the navy fleet from bombings, to blowing up bridges and taking out infiltrating forces. However, your flying skills will only be tested if you have a joystick or gamepad, as the humble mouse isn't supported.



Take out the German Fokkers... I mean Stukas (Freudian slip there).



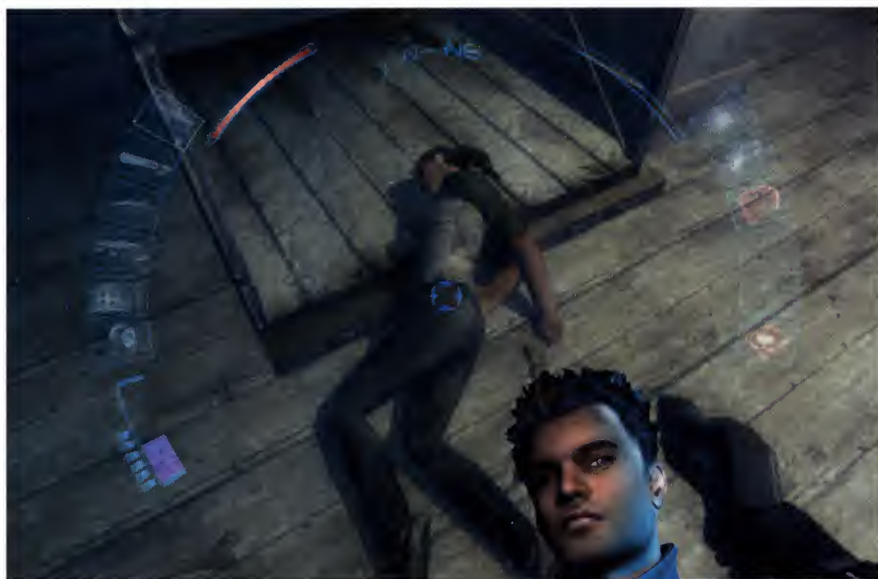
We forgot to pull up after dropping the bomb.



The Spitfire: Britain's greatest achievement?



Like some dodgy futuristic form of karaoke.



DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

CD2/DVD Pub: Eidos **Dev:** Ion Storm **Reviewed:** Issue 137, 86%

The demo of the sequel to the fantastic *Deus Ex* landed on our doorstep this month, with the objective being for you to obtain a ride. In true *Deus Ex* fashion, how you go about obtaining it is up to you. You start off outside a bar called the Greasel Pit, inside which you'll find Sid Black. Complete with dodgy accent, Sid has lost his ship to Sophia

Sak, to whom he owes money to the sum of 1000 credits. If you can return his ship, he'll offer you a lift – what a guy.

The non-linear gameplay supports many different ways of going about the same objective – we played through the demo three times and found three different ways of completing it. We've no doubt there are more.



The Eye biomod comes in handy.



DVD EXCLUSIVES

ONLY AVAILABLE ON PC ZONE'S DVD EDITION. TO SUBSCRIBE, TURN TO PAGE 86. FOR FULL CONTENTS SEE BACK OF THE BOX

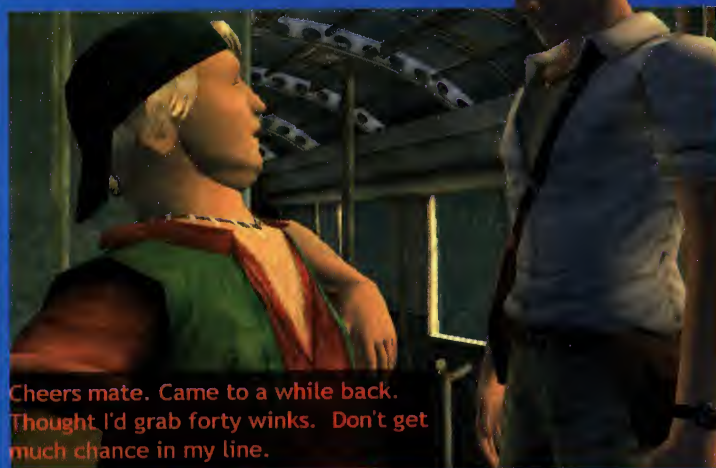
THE ESSENTIAL SELECTION

The PC ZONE DVD is now double-sided. On one you've got all the new content, but flip it over and you'll find the Essential Selection, the best demos and mods the world has ever created, along with all the patches, drivers and all the utilities you need to make your PC a shrine of gaming goodness.

BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

DVD Pub: THQ **Dev:** Revolution

Software Reviewed: Issue 136, 75%



Cheers mate. Came to a while back. Thought I'd grab forty winks. Don't get much chance in my line.

Your Aussie friend redefines the word 'relaxed'.

The intro movie of this demo leaves you dangling over a cliff in a plane – all in a day's work for a seasoned adventurer. Use arrow keys to move and the W, A, S, and D keys to perform different actions based on the menu in the bottom-right. The space bar brings up your inventory,

while page up and page down cycles between highlights (and actions).

With this in mind, you can now set out to rescue George Stobbart and his hapless Aussie friend from the perils of falling off a cliff by using the vast array of objects nearby. Like a beer bottle...

WARLORDS IV

DVD Pub: Ubisoft

Dev: Infinite Interactive

Reviewed: Issue 136, 75%



Looks like where Will lives...

Dragonguard Keep is the map in this turn-based demo. You start off with your capital city, from where you can produce troops. When you move your troops to ruins, buildings, castles or enemy troops, a fight ensues. When one of your troops dies, the choice is yours as to which will step up next. Once one side's troops are destroyed, whoever's left standing wins.

There are spells to research and it's essential to take over as many cities as possible to produce troops. Once all the towns have been taken over, you've won!



By the end of LOTR, Peter Jackson had pissed away all of his FX budget.

AGE OF MYTHOLOGY: THE TITANS

DVD Pub: Microsoft **Dev:** Ensemble Studios

Reviewed: Issue 136, 85%

Offering another bout of great AoM gameplay, this demo sees you helping out the doomed Atlanteans in a desperate fight for survival. You start off in a cold, bleak landscape that cannot support any farming (somewhat like Scotland then), and your objective is to travel to a more fertile land that can

support your town's population. Sounds simple enough, eh? As always, there are plenty of enemies in your way, so you'll need to get busy training troops and making good use of the Fire Siphons (flame-throwing siege weapons) that are donated to you. A marsh map is also available to play.

DUNGEON SIEGE: LEGENDS OF ARANNA

DVD Pub: Activision **Dev:** Mad Doc Software

Reviewed: Issue 138, 78%



Murder endangered species.

You're the hero who must save the village from evil forces – the usual shtick. Start off by creating your character from options such as gender, face and outfit. Once you've donned a suitably impressive look, start the game by finding a better weapon (after all, a blunt dagger hardly sounds menacing does



Hack! Slash! Repeat!

it?), then go to the mayor who will task you with helping the village out by discovering what happened to their supplies. Fight off worms, moths, wolves, snow boars and yetis with a combination of weapons and magic and destroy your opponent at the end to rescue the village and its people. Hurray!

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GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

TOTAL ANNIHILATION

For all the impact of *Command & Conquer*, *Total Annihilation* remains one of the most frenetic, refined and fun games in RTS history. Six years on, a bleary-eyed *Richie Shoemaker* rediscovers an unrelentingly playable masterpiece

GAME *Total Annihilation*
DEVELOPER Cavedog
RELEASED September 1997

INFLUENCED All the games featured so far in our 'Changed The World' series have had a profound effect on the people who played them. Some may hold greater claim to have altered the world of gaming for the better, like *Doom* and *Command & Conquer*. However, those with less impact and more subtle innovation – like *X-Com* and *Ultima VII* – deserve equal if not greater acclaim, as they advanced a familiar gaming experience in subtle yet wonderful ways. *Total Annihilation* is one such game.



PROFILE

While most UK coders were cutting their teeth on the Sinclair Spectrum, 14-year-old Canadian-born Chris Taylor was learning the ropes on his 16K TRS-80, writing simple games just for fun (there was little else to do on a TRS-80, after all). Self-taught and rather evangelical about the fact that he didn't have a formal education in game design, Chris began his career at Distinctive Software, famous for the *Test Drive* series in the mid '80s. After knocking out a trio of well-received sports games (during which time Distinctive was assimilated by its ideological antithesis, EA), Chris eventually decamped to Washington to make an RTS with *Monkey Island* mastermind Ron Gilbert.



NAME Chris Taylor
ROLE ON TA Project leader, design and programming lead
FIRST GAME WORKED ON *Hardball II* (Accolade, 1989)

NOW WORKING ON "A sequel to *Dungeon Siege*, and I've also been working on a new RTS game for the better part of a year. There will be an announcement soon."

SIX YEARS ago, at a time of high excitement for the real-time strategy genre, a good-looking click-and-drag number was released called *Total Annihilation*. Harking from an unknown US developer, the game was initially dismissed as a *Command & Conquer* clone, its chief selling point seeming to be the fairly inevitable move to full 3D units. Slowly, however, the game began to reveal its true depths. This wasn't just C&C-plus, this was war on a scale beyond compare, with dozens of uniquely useful units and a wealth of strategic options that remain extraordinary to this day.

Six years on, *Total Annihilation* has proved to be one of the most enduring and playable RTS games ever. Mods and total conversions are still in production, new units still appear on the Net on a regular basis, and the game is still played by hundreds of fans every day – which is more than can be said for contemporaries like *Quake II* and *Age Of Empires*. Few would argue it's one of the best RTS games ever constructed.

GO FORTH AND CONQUER

Total Annihilation's basic strategy was to advance the existing RTS blueprint in every possible direction. Familiar elements were cribbed from the likes of *Command & Conquer*, but there was also a huge amount of innovation at a micro-level. TA's chief architect Chris Taylor is candid about his inspirations.

"I was walking around E3 in 1995, checking out what everyone else had been up to when I came across *Command &*

Conquer. I'd already heard about it and I was a fan of Westwood's *Dune 2*, but when I played C&C I was blown away. Until then, I'd become something of a career sports game developer, having worked on *Hardball 2* and *4-D Boxing*, but after playing C&C I said to myself, that's it, I'm going to build a real-time strategy game; no more sports games, from here on in it's tanks and jet fighters!"

LET'S GET TOGETHER

In order to fulfil his dream of "making things blow up", Chris called an old friend from his days working at Accolade, Shelley Day, who, along with industry legend Ron Gilbert (of *Monkey Island* fame), ran kiddie software developer Humongous Entertainment.

Ron Gilbert was keen for Humongous to branch out and set up a division geared towards a more mature market, and Chris's idea of "the ultimate war game" seemed to take root. Soon after, Chris was drafted in to lead the development on the studio's first game, *Total Annihilation*. All that was left (apart from development) was to come up with a suitable studio name. In the end it came down to a flip of the coin. Heads, it was Frozen Yak; tails, it was Cavedog. The sheltered canine won.

EARTH, WIND AND FIRE

When work on *Total Annihilation* began in January 1996, Chris's objectives were clear: the game was to feature true 3D terrain (as opposed to the split level-style maps of C&C), polygon rather than sprite-based units and a gameworld that obeyed basic physical laws. These included true line-of-sight, proper ballistics and even wind and water effects.

"We were happy with the results of our early code experiments," says Chris. "It was exciting and we had high hopes for the way the various units would move. When a unit fired, we wanted its weapon barrel to recoil, a muzzle flash and smoke. The shell would then fly in a perfect arc and when hit, a unit would jolt. When we had all the physics and basic graphics done, it was then just a case of sitting down and writing the game."

With most rival games offering less than half the content, you'd assume TA was a nightmare project. The game featured 150 land, sea and air units, 50 single-player missions and many multiplayer options. Surely the more physical objects a game has, the harder it is to build, test and balance?

"Yes, but we were very efficient," grins Chris. "The game was finished around September 1997 – about 20 months development time in total. We had a bunch of different schedules, but in the end it was just a giant sprint to the finish line. There are always problems, but nothing we couldn't overcome. And there were a lot of things we wanted to include in the game that had to be scrapped.

"For example, bridges – we wanted to give the player the ability to build and destroy them, something that's still difficult to do today, six years later."





Low on harvesting, high on carnage.



Considering it came before the 3D boom, TA still looks bloody good today.

Despite the inclusion of Mech-style walker units, tanks, planes, ships, static gun emplacements and all the required buildings to create them, Chris felt early on in TA's development that the game lacked a certain something.

"I wanted to close the gap between the player and the game," he says. "Rather than watch from above, I wanted to take you to the battlefield and involve you at a more personal level. That's when I thought of the Commander; the ultimate end-all unit – you."

One of TA's true strokes of genius, the Commander was central to the game. If he died, it was game over – but he wasn't a typical desk-bound general, hidden away and protected. He could build all the basic level units in the game faster than any of

the Construction bots. He could reclaim resources from the battlefield, repair, cloak and detect enemy units and walk underwater. Best of all, he was well armed and fully armoured, with the game's most powerful weapon – the D-Gun.

WILLING AND ABLE

However, in spite of their awesome capabilities, it's not the Commanders that Chris remembers most fondly from the game, but the humble KBot – the lurching, stumbling metallic foot soldiers of TA.

"They had real personality," enthuses Chris. "We came up with KBots just to add more alternatives for players. Some people like conventional units; others prefer ones that are more unique. Units are like toys: no matter how many you



Cavedog pioneered the concept of releasing free weekly content.

have, you get bored with them. Ergo, the more fun units you have, the less chance of falling asleep at the keyboard."

GIVE THE DOG A BONE

Soon after TA was released, Cavedog began releasing units for download from its website. The aim might have been to stave off player boredom, but the result was a rapidly ballooning and hugely loyal fanbase. Frequent forum visits from the Cavedog team also fed this phenomenon, as did the popularity of the 3D unit viewer released before the game.

"We felt really good about the game three-quarters of the way through development," says Chris. "But until the game was out there, we were never sure how people would react. In the end, the

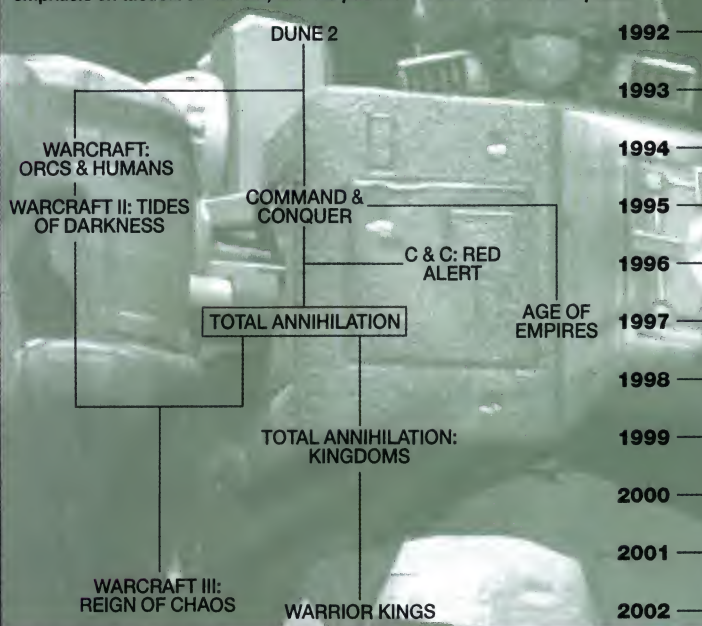
response we got was very, very positive, and it was followed up by the mods and cool strategies which were fantastic to see evolve over the years.

"To be honest, I was blown away and never expected the game to take off the way it did. The multiplayer was very important for that, and after it shipped, it was even more important than we first thought. In fact, we added co-operative multiplayer because everyone was insisting that we supported team play."

With plans for four expansion packs and a full-blown sequel already in place, Cavedog began taking steps to capitalise on the success of its debut. It quickly did with 1998's TA: The Core Contingency, an add-on that complemented TA's already massive arsenal with nearly a hundred new toys including

FAMILY TREE

Total Annihilation was full of small innovations, some of which seemed like logical advances at the time, some of which were never usefully applied again. The clearest marks left on later RTSs are perhaps the use of Commander-style units, the emphasis on tactical 3D terrain, and the push for more robust online options.



"We weren't sure how people would react, but I never expected the game to take off the way it did"

CHRIS TAYLOR
PROJECT LEADER, *TA*

submarines and seaplanes. Soon after its completion, Chris Taylor decided it was time to move on.

COOKING WITH GAS

"I left for various reasons," says Chris. "The biggest was my personal dream of starting my own company, and the time was right to make that happen."

Cavedog continued regardless, but soon the free downloads began to dry up and the second expansion, *TA: Battle Tactics* was a disappointing addition, full of maps but lacking real substance.

Rather than begin a proper *TA2*, it was decided that *TA*'s next follow-up would be a fantasy-themed RTS. The result was *Total Annihilation: Kingdoms*. While the game looked good and offered a range of unique units, *TA: K* lacked the frenetic pace of its predecessor and was plagued with performance issues. Just after its release at the end of 1999, Taylor's Gas Powered Games announced *Dungeon Siege*. Six months later, having cancelled the promising FPS *Amen: The Awakening*, Cavedog was put down by struggling publisher GT Interactive.

LIVE FOREVER

Despite its short life, Cavedog's legacy remains strong. Among its contemporaries and even against more modern games, *TA* remains highly playable and unique. Few games from that era, if any, can claim to have stood the test of time so well.

"It comes down to the team members who brought it all together," concludes Chris Taylor. "Aspects like the free flowing nature of the design, the flexible engine



Half the fun came from the sheer numbers of units under you.

design which supports mods and the interface are all things I'm proud of. Also, much of the credit must go to the mod community, which kept the game fresh with all the new units, maps and AI improvements. They did an amazing job and still do. I still have a look over the *TA* community occasionally and it amazes me that after six years, people are still creating content for the game." **PC**

THE FUTURE

SHOULD YOU EXPECT MORE ANNIHILATION SOON?

When Cavedog closed its doors back in 2000, there seemed little hope for a *Total Annihilation* sequel. That all changed when publisher Infogrames (now Atari) swooped in and bought the ailing GT Interactive – and the rights to *TA* along with it. Unfortunately, the game's creator had bugged off, putting a question mark over any possible *Total Annihilation 2*. "I've been approached by various publishers and developers to play a consulting role on various RTS projects, but not specifically *TA2*," admits Chris Taylor.

After months of frenzied speculation, it was revealed that Atari would be resurrecting the *TA* series, and that South Korean developer/publisher Phantagram would be doing the donkey work on the new title. Having made a name for itself with its decent fantasy RTS *Kingdom Under Fire*, the appointment seemed like a good one – especially when you consider the obsessive fervour for RTS games in that part of the world. "I think it's cool that Atari feels the game design is worth continuing with," says Chris. "I wish the company well, and hope that the game is fun to play."

We couldn't agree more, though with the recent acquisition of Phantagram by publishing giant NCsoft, the future of the sequel is again under question. Our spies are at work and we expect news soon.



THE LIONHEAD DIARIES

The development of *Black & White 2* has thrown up village life and warfare, rampant nymphomaniacs and armies full of young children. It's good when you're god, says **John McLean-Foreman**



WHAT we're creating over at Black & White Studios is a god game – and in a god game, as you might expect, it's vitally

important that you get to feel like a god. Empires crumble at your command, social structures swing based on your mood and the world you control alters itself to reflect your true nature. In a nutshell, you want to feel all-powerful. That may sound obvious, but in the first *Black & White*, I sometimes felt more like an errand boy doing favours for a bunch of thankless little whiners. There seemed to be no global ramifications to my actions whatsoever.

Well, that's not the case in *B&W2*. Because we really, really want you to feel like a god when you play this game, we've kept our design process very organic. We try something, and if it doesn't work, we scratch our collective heads and try to puzzle out why it didn't work.

For example, we built a siege weapon, dragged it through the city and we

really. In creating the breeder disciples, a particular breeder (a female) was moving through the ranks of a platoon of soldiers, boosting morale, so to speak. The female breeders can sleep with anyone they wish, but once they become pregnant, they're supposed to declare it a job well done and stop. This young lady not only slept with every member of the army, but accosted every male who happened to cross her path on her way home.

CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE

Glen had another, yet unrelated, bug to demonstrate. With the click of a couple of buttons, he set up a recruitment tent inside a residential area and began drafting children into the army. A little politically incorrect perhaps, but certainly not unrealistic.

Glen actually had the solution to the 'draft-a-kid' problem at hand and was just about to implement it when we insisted that he first show us the children being slaughtered by an elite group of samurai. If only there had been sound effects too. It did raise an interesting question though:

“This female slept with every member of the army and accosted every male who crossed her path going home”

JOHN MCLEAN-FOREMAN FICTION WRITER, LIONHEAD

thought, 'why has nobody reacted to it'? So we fiddled about with the program until they did. Granted, that's not something very godly, but it is a fine example of action and reaction. Now expand that concept to the point where villagers react to just about everything that you do, and you start to understand what it feels like to play god.

There are two distinctly different ways to play the game: one focuses on building and nurturing majestic cities that lure enemy villagers away from their homeland in order to become a citizen of your empire; the other focuses on taking your enemies' territory by force. The trick here is teaching the game how to realistically have both game styles working in conjunction with each other – something which doesn't always happen in ways that we expect it to.

NEED TO BREED

One morning, I overheard some tittering coming from the programmer's side of the office. Glen (our villager AI programmer) and Jonty (head of B&W Studios) were both looking highly amused. It seems there was a little glitch – well, oversight

because *Black & White* is about free will, should we allow the player to put children in their army if they want to? The game no longer automatically recruits children if they're near the tent, but if the child is old enough to grab a sword and the player is evil enough...

Speaking of the horrors of war, if you repeatedly declare war against the various computer players, the ramifications of that behaviour will ripple across the world and your opponents' playing strategies will alter accordingly. Furthermore, many of the characters will react differently than they would if you were a good god.

Personally, I plan to declare war on everybody, especially when we test the game against each other. I think that's largely due to Jonty's continuous assumption that I'll play the scummiest god possible – but I also want to take advantage of a little loophole in his playing strategy while it's still available.

You see, his Creature is so sickeningly compassionate, it hasn't learned not to heal everyone who gets hurt yet, and that includes invading armies. My Creature will not be making any such foolish mistakes – in fact, he'll be casting horrifying, flesh-



You really don't want to make that thing angry.



The new security measures at Glastonbury worked a treat.

melting spells, kicking Jonty's Creature when it's down, commanding my armies to perform complex military manoeuvres (that are based on real land war strategies of the era, incidentally), and generally being a miserable swine. Jonty tells me that he has plans for my people. I find that rather ominous.

GODSPELL

Of course, that doesn't mean that I won't also be building up my city to counteract my people's desire to emigrate to a kinder, more magnificent land. If you're lax as a god, your people will become dissatisfied and start picketing outside your cathedral. They might even riot. While my good

opponents will undoubtedly be setting up idyllic gardens, sculpting grand statues and laying roads to make travel easier – along with building taverns where townsfolk can enjoy some time off and doing whatever else it takes to build an outstanding city – I'll be throwing down the bars (I do like those) and torture chambers wherever I notice unrest. I don't need my people's love, just their blind obedience and a healthy dose of fear.

As always, it comes down to choice. Be nice and the world will flock to your door. Be evil and you get to kick the doors in. Either way, everything you do has a consequence, so prepare to play god because your people are watching. **PC2**

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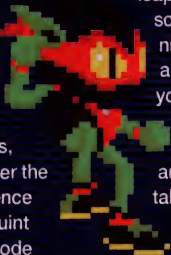
Clutching a dog-eared Magic Eye poster and wearing a mangy Ace of Base T-shirt, Will Porter recalls his bowl haircut era

ZOOL

Lollipop-endorsed platformer with a paranoid streak

HERO ANT-THING, ninja of the nth dimension and failed heir-apparent to the Sonic legacy, Zool had a particularly difficult day in 1993. Trapped on a planet of evil confectionery gone mad, it was his mission to spin, shoot and leap through six worlds of themed bizarreness.

With a glowing endorsement from Chupa Chups, whose logo was plastered all over the opening level, it was the experience of many a young teenager to squint at the game's copy-protection code wheel with a promotional orange lollipop jammed in his gob and a look of abject confusion in his eyes.



Y'see, Zool was one of those games with password-protection dreamed up in some sort of MI5 bunker: not only did you have to match up dancing or leap-frogging Zools given to you on-screen, but then there were black numbers (in gloss paint) written on a black surface (in matt paint) that you had to hold up to a window to decipher. This was the heyday of copy-protection paranoia, and publisher Gremlin wasn't taking any chances with shiftily looking photocopier users.

Sonic was truly the platform king in those days, but Zool put up a good fight with its rampaging mint humbugs, secret shoot 'em up missions

and Black & Decker drillsets. Especially notable was the Music World, where you leapt from note to note on a giant keyboard and got showered with bonuses if you played out tunes from earlier in the level. And then there was the giant banana boss who, along with

his bastard alarm clock, was ridiculously difficult to kill. A statutory sequel appeared a while later, with an exciting new female ant-ninja (who could have been a bit sexier), but for the time being, Zool was the best platformer around. Unless you owned a Mega Drive.



Hardest. Boss. Ever.



Game in a game. How postmodern.

THE BEST OF THE REST



BATTLE CHESS 4000

(PC)

Robot rooks, maggot-like pawns and a queen with a sexy swagger all hacked chunks off each other in a chess game that wasn't quite as clever as Deep Blue, but was a lot more entertaining. Knights had lightsabers, rooks were turned into tin cans that crushed the opposition and queens were turned into flies, duly swatted by scheming bishops. For a few days at least, it seemed like chess wasn't for nerds after all.



SPEAR OF DESTINY

(PC)

The cash-in that followed shareware-giant *Wolfenstein* saw you in search of the spear that placed the side of Christ. Id Software faced a lot of criticism for its leap into the commercial mainstream and even *PC ZONE*, bastion of gaming greatness, claimed the developer was "in the long grass where the big dogs go" and thoroughly lost. We'd now like to formally retract that statement.



TERMINATOR 2029

(PC)

Playing one of John Connor's freedom fighters, 2029 was the oft-forgotten forerunner to Bethesda's later *Future Shock*. You were restricted to only looking one of four ways, so every time you looked left you had to spin 90 degrees. However, in those days it was still a thrill to be fighting real terminators in a movie spin-off that didn't suck quite as much as all the others. If only that were still true today.



EL-FISH

(PC)

Less a game and more a 'Sim Fish' aquarium, a high-end PC and a copy of *El-Fish* meant you could breed fish, catch fish, mutate fish and watch them swimming in the luxury of your monitor. Truly a fish-lover's dream. You could go for a luxury tank filled with underwater flora and fauna, or a tacky set-up with divers, skulls and treasure chests. But at the end of the day, it was great just watching fish.

NEWSFLASH

IT'S MAY 1993 AND...

- The number of Microsoft Word users hits ten million and continues to climb – with Bill Gates swimming in dollar bills.
- On May 28th, the movie of *Super Mario Bros* is unleashed to baffled audiences worldwide. With no magic growth mushrooms, a limited number of moving platforms and a de-evolved King Koopa (who looked an awful lot like Dennis Hopper with a pointy tongue), it remains a prime example of why gaming should be a Hollywood no-go area.
- The arcades, which were places where ruffians went to loiter in ages past, are now full of cap-wearing youths playing *NBA Jam*.
- The first commercial CD re-writer goes on the market for a bargain \$3,995: the days of rampant CD piracy are still a long way off. Unless you're minted.

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PRESENTS

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PCZONE VERDICT

07

"You might as well invite the developers round to piss in your eyes."



VIRTUAL RAMBLER

Take to the hills and dales of England and Wales, with or without sandwiches. (New: includes *Naked Rambler* patch.)

PCZONE VERDICT

11

"They should have replaced the intro sequence with a still photograph of a horse pissing into a bucket instead."



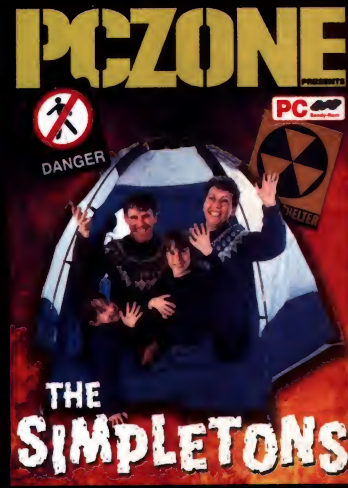
WORLD NETBALL 2004 EXTREME

Now with authentic leisure centres, improved facial animations and pleated skirts that move in the wind.

PCZONE VERDICT

17

"Everyone involved in making this should be marched outside on a cold winter's morning and shot in the face at point blank range."



THE SIMPLETONS

Take control of a house full of middle-England idiots and despair as you realise the futility of your own existence.

PCZONE VERDICT

01

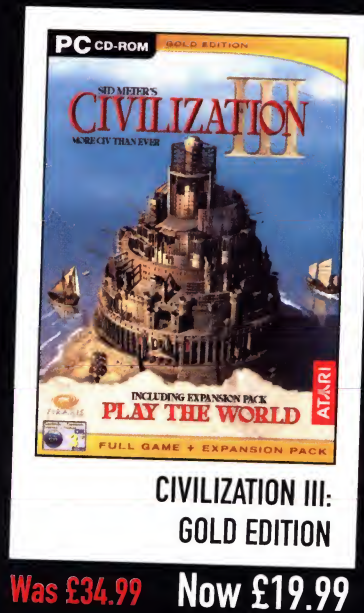
"A game that's practically pulling down its trousers and begging you to kick its arse black and blue."

PC Seedy-Rom

It's a mess...
When it's 20% or less

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PC CD

EGOSOFT



DEEP SILVER

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